

WEST / CENTRAL AREA COMMITTEE

23 September 2010
7.30 am - 10.40 pm

City Councillors for:

Castle (Simon Kightley, John Hipkin, Tania Zmura)

Market (Tim Bick, Rosenstiel)

Newnham (Rod Cantrill, Sian Reid, Julie Smith)

Co-opted non-voting members:

County Councillors: Brooks-Gordon (Castle)

Council Officers Present:

Cambridge City Council:

Toni Ainley – Head of Streets and Open Spaces

Diana Oviatt-Ham – Principal Arboricultural Officer

John Preston – Historic Environment Manager

Alistair Wilson – Green Space Manager

Andrew Preston – Environmental Projects Manager

Dinah Foley-Norman – Principal Landscape Architect

Glenn Burgess – Committee Manager

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

10/43/WAC Apologies

Apologies were received from City Councillor Dixon and County Councillors Nethsingha and Whitebread.

10/44/WAC Declarations of Interest

None.

**10/45/WAC Environmental Improvement Programme: Midsummer
Common & Jesus Green Tree Planting Scheme**

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation thanked members of the public for attending and emphasised that, as custodian for the city, the Council

was commitment to preserving and enhancing green spaces for residents and visitors.

The Historic Environment Manager gave a short presentation on historic context, followed by a presentation by the Environmental Improvements Manager on the public consultation and the resulting proposals.

Questions, comments and observations from the public

1) Ann Garvey: The proposed removal of the Leylandii hedge will have an effect for the users of the swimming pool. It currently provides screening and acts as both a noise and wind break. Why does question 13 of the consultation document not give an option for retaining the Leylandii hedge?

The Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that the proposal was to gradually reduce the height of the Leylandii hedge, which would then allow the Limes to become established. A hedge would then be established underneath the Limes to provide longer-term screening.

It was confirmed that the pool users that responded to the consultation were in favour of this proposal.

2) Ann Garvey: The Conifer trees around the tennis courts are pleasant and healthy specimens. It is proposed that these are replaced by Lime trees, but this will result in the sticky residue falling into the courts and affecting their usage.

The Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that the Limes would not affect the tennis courts as any debris shed would fall during times that the courts were not traditionally used. The Council had also recently approved that the tennis courts be moved.

3) Member of the public: The proposed additional planting seems to concentrate solely on the use of Lime trees and takes a very uniformed approach. The planting of a more natural landscape, with less uniformity, would be more appropriate.

The Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that a number of factors needed to be considered when choosing a species. These could include mixture/type

of soil, and the 'role' the tree would take. Many options had been looked at including Oak, Ash and Beech, but Lime proved to be the most suitable.

4) Rosemary Jones: Healthy trees should not be cut down.

These comments were noted.

5) Donald Holm: It is essential that the Council take a long-term view of tree management. I feel these proposals are very well advised by Council officers, and are exactly right for the future of the city.

These comments were noted.

6) Member of the public: After speaking to a Psychologist in Criminal Behaviours it seems that incorrect tree planting could result in an increase in anti-social behaviour and crime.

The Environmental Improvements Manager confirmed that these issues had been taken into account when the proposals were being developed. It was also noted that careful consideration would be given to the exact positional of the planting when the proposals were agreed.

Councillor Brooks-Gordon noted that, whilst the fear of crime was a very important issue, she knew of no evidence to support the view that trees affected anti-social behaviour or crime. The lighting, and its affect on fear of crime, was however an important issue and she would be happy to work with officers on this issue.

7) Member of the public: I have concerns that the consultation document was badly designed.

These comments were noted.

8) Member of the public: Houses in the close vicinity of large trees have difficulty with getting insurance due to the potential damage they cause.

These comments were noted.

9) Member of the public: The residents of North Terrace object to the proposals for Area D and have started a petition.

The Chair confirmed that further consultation would be taking place with residents concerning this part of the scheme.

10) Caroline Evans: A single species of tree should not be used. The easiest way to introduce disease is to introduce a monoculture.

These comments were noted.

11) Caroline Evans: Trees are living beings and there is no excuse for their felling simply for aesthetic or fashionable reasons. Trees should only be felled if they are dangerous.

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation emphasised that the Council were committed to the preservation and enhancement of the open spaces in the city. The Council were the custodians of the city and it had an obligation to future generations to protect these spaces. It should be recognised that the Council and the public were working towards the same goal.

12) Caroline Evans: A lot has been said about the need to fell diseased trees. If left, diseased trees can recover and develop their own immune system. There have been examples of this with Sweet Chestnut trees in Switzerland.

The Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that it was very unusual for trees to recover from disease.

Trees would be monitored every three years with a variety of methods used to detect disease. It was noted that the council would only fell a tree when the disease or decay was at an advanced stage and the tree was deemed dangerous to the public. Unless a diseased tree was deemed dangerous to the public it would not be felled – and there were examples of this on Coe Fen and Sheeps Green.

13) Suzanne John-Alan: If the Horse Chestnuts are simply replaced they may become diseased again. Should we take an ‘all or nothing’ approach to this area?

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation confirmed that the results of the consultation supported retaining these trees and only replacing them if necessary.

The Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that the micro-moth was an infestation as appose to a disease of the tree and could be effectively managed.

14) Simon Brown: Open spaces after dark can be scary and dangerous places and the type and layout of the planting could have an impact on crime.

These areas of open space are frequently used at night by people travelling home from pubs and clubs in town, and they should be consulted.

These comments were noted.

15) Richard Taylor: I am concerned that some of the proposed planting encroaches too far onto the common, and this may affect sight lines and use of the space.

The Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that the results of the consultation indicated a desire for way faring trees to be planted.

It was also noted that discussions had taken place with the relevant officers and the planting would not affect the current use of the space.

16) Richard Taylor: The results of the consultation indicated support for more variety in the species of trees planted. The proposals however suggest strong lines of single species trees.

These comments were noted.

17) Richard Taylor: I would proposed a meeting to discuss the City Wide Tree Strategy – as suggested by Councillor Smith during her time as Executive Councillor.

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation stated that whilst a commitment has been made to hold a tree seminar, the overwhelming view of the public was that the Council should deliver tree planting this autumn. A decision could be taken to put the whole project on hold and have further discussions, but that would go against the views of the public.

18) Val Cornish: Over the last few years there seems to have been a wide scale Council agenda for felling mature trees across the city – is this the case?

Councillor Smith confirmed that shortly before she became the Executive Councillor for that portfolio a tree survey had been undertaken. Prior to that, maintenance of trees on open spaces was entirely reactive. Following the survey, quite a lot work had been undertaken but the expectation was that this would reduce once the main issues had been resolved.

Val Cornish: I do not think the majority of the public realised that this survey had taken place. Thank you - I am now reassured that a set agenda is not in place.

Councillor Reid confirmed that in the last year a full public consultation had taken place on the Council's new Tree Protocol. When taking decisions on trees the Council was fully committed to being as transparent and accountable to the public as possible.

19) Member of the public: What form of further consultation will take place with residents of North Terrace?

The Environmental Improvements Manager confirmed that all residents would be asked for their views and a meeting arranged to discuss any issues in detail.

20) Dick Baxter (Friends of Midsummer Common): I have lived facing the common for fourteen years and over the last ten years trees have been disappearing and not being replaced by the Council. This is an ideal opportunity to replant.

I am concerned that over the years a number of surveys to map the trees on Midsummer Common have been conducted. These have all been placed on a shelf somewhere and now we have just done a further mapping exercise.

The Friends of Midsummer Common met this week to formulate our response to the proposals.

Mr Baxter tabled and spoke to a pre-prepared response document (attached for information)

21) Peter Constable (Chair of Jesus Green Residents Association): The consultation received a good response rate and the suggested proposals are a good way to move forward. However I do feel that the options within the consultation document could have been better written.

These comments were noted.

22) Peter Constable (Chair of Jesus Green Residents Association): One of the trees proposed for felling on the Lower Park Street end of the Riverside Path is a memorial tree. This issue needs to be looked at sensitively.

The Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that discussions would take place with the family prior to any work being carried out.

23) Peter Constable (Chair of Jesus Green Residents Association): Three new trees are proposed near Jesus Ditch. The felling of the existing trees will affect the view. This is also the case with the Leylandii at La Mimosa and the trees on the towpath between the swimming pool and the bridge. It is our opinion that views across the open spaces should be protected.

These comments were noted.

24) Peter Constable (Chair of Jesus Green Residents Association): Which trees are outside of the Council's Tree Protocol?

The Environmental Improvements Manager confirmed that all Council owned trees were covered by the Tree Protocol.

25) John Lawton (Save our Green Spaces): The proposed London Planes to screen the public toilet will be too large and dwarf the other species.

We would support strategic planting along Victoria Avenue with a vertical line of Chestnuts and an infill.

As this is an historic line of trees, we would also support row planting for North Terrace. This would also provide a root barrier and prevent future problems.

These comments were noted.

Discussion by Councillors followed by a vote on the officer's recommendation

Councillor Smith gave some historical context to the Council's funding of tree works. It was noted that some of the proposals included the replacement of trees as and when they became diseased and unsafe, and the ongoing funding for this would need to be looked at carefully.

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation confirmed that, whilst there was pressure on the tree planting budget, the Council had made a clear commitment to the planting and replanting of trees. It was agreed that discussions would take place with the new Head of Service regarding a possible shift in the budgets to further support tree planting.

Councillor Hipkin recommended that, whilst it would mean missing this year's planting season, the committee should vote on the option of postponing the project and holding further discussions.

The Committee resolved by 7 votes to 0:

- not to postpone the project until next year

Members thanked officers for their hard work and dedication and highlighted their high level of expertise in the subject area.

Some concern was expressed that the 'strategic and succession' elements of the scheme had now been lost. Whilst recognising that this was an emotive issue, it was felt that this type of tree management would result in a better long-term solution.

In response the Principal Arboricultural Officer confirmed that replacing trees 'piecemeal' would lose the uniformity. It was also noted that a full strategic approach would cost considerably more than the allocated £50,000.

In response to some concerns regarding the options included in the consultation the Principal Landscape Architect confirmed that, whilst it was difficult to achieve a balance, the options had been developed as a result of the workshop in July. The public were also given an opportunity within the document to add extra comments and suggestions.

Further concern was raised regarding the possible affect on the sight lines on Butt Green and the loss of the memorial tree. It was also noted that an attempt to plant double avenues of trees on New Square had failed. Officers noted these comments.

The Committee agreed to vote on the proposals for each area separately.

The Committee resolved to:

Support the following proposals:

- **Area A:** Fort St George Riverside (by 7 votes to 0)
- **Area B:** Riverside Path (by 8 votes to 0: unanimous)
- **Area C:** Brunswick Development Site (by 8 votes to 0: unanimous)
- **Area F:** Victoria Avenue (by 7 votes to 0)
- **Area G:** London Plane Avenue (by 7 votes to 0)
- **Area H:** Lower Park Street Walk – with the species of trees delegated to officers in consultation with the Chair and Ward Councillor and after discussion with the school (by 8 votes to 0: unanimous)
- **Area I:** Park Parade Boundary (by 7 votes to 0)
- **Area J:** Cheery Avenue (by 8 votes to 0: unanimous)
- **Area K:** Swimming Pool Area - with the species delegated to officers in consultation with the Chair (8 votes to 0: unanimous)
- **Area L:** Jesus Green towpath – with consideration to be taken by officers (in discussion with the Chair and Ward Councillors) of the need to maintain the views where possible.

Councillor Rosenstiel proposed the following amendment to the proposal for Area E: Butt Green:

- To remove the Lime trees in order to increase safety of the cycle route

The amendment was lost by 1 vote to 7

The Committee resolved to:

Support the following proposal:

- **Area E:** Butt Green (7 votes to 0)

Subject to further consultation with local residents, the approval of proposals for **Area D** (Southern Boundary) was delegated to the Chair in consultation with Ward Councillors.

Councillor Bick requested that, given the degree of public interest in this subject and the welcome agreement for a large number of additional trees, that officers define and pursue opportunities for community involvement in the planting and nurturing of the new stock, thinking particularly about young people. He suggested co-ordination with the Council's Community Development service. The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation agreed to ensure that this happened.

The Executive Councillor for Arts and Recreation thanked the public, officers and members of the committee for their input.

The meeting ended at 10.40 pm

CHAIR