



Registered charity no: 1161565

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***Poole Farm, Leigham, Plymouth, PL6 8NF***

Plymouth City Council has produced a revised scheme for regenerating Armada Way and invited comments through the consulting agency, ECF.

Plymouth Tree People has shared the proposals with its members and, after discussion, the charity's Trustees wish to make the following comments based on the information presented so far. We may make further comments as more information becomes available and particularly wish to see:

- Dimensioned or scaled plans in order to compare the areas of hard and soft surfaces with those in previous designs.
- the Arboricultural Method Statement, which should cover the conduct of construction work next to the retained trees and the translocation processes.
- the detailed rationale for translocating each of the six trees affected. This should have been explained more fully in the consultation materials.
- the most recent Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.
- The long-term management plan.

We acknowledge how the design has evolved to accommodate a variety of uses and how the designers have successfully incorporated all except six of the surviving trees into the revised scheme.

As in previous consultations, the commitment to providing better rooting conditions for the sixteen Liquidambar in the Piazza is most welcome. We also note with satisfaction that Koster oaks are no longer to be included, and Scots pine and stone pine will be there to enhance year-round interest.

The design remains heavily characterised by the wide expanses of unshaded paved surfaces which are presumably to satisfy a requirement for close surveillance. We maintain this is a misguided priority when climate change will bring hot summers and wet winters, and tree cover becomes essential for mitigating the effects on people and places. Tree numbers are not the only consideration; spacing and choice of form are equally relevant. The proposed design makes extensive use of *Acer campestre* 'Lineco' which is one of the tight-canopy field maple clones. More spreading forms are available, and ought to be used instead with consequential benefits for local climate mitigation, quality of place and peoples' perceptions. Such a substitution would have minimal impact on individual safety and, indeed, research suggests there is a strong link between better tree cover and reduced crime.

In the proposed planting scheme, field maples make up 13% of the total tree stock which exceeds the '10-20-30' rule advocated by the Tree & Design Action Group and the British Standard BS 8545:2014 Trees: from nursery to independence in the landscape – Recommendations. It should be quite possible to achieve a better species mix without compromising the design's overall integrity.

We are at a loss to comment on the choice of *Ginkgo biloba* 'Mayfield'. Male clones do not feature in the Hilliers catalogue whereas Barchams has this to say: *"Female plants fruit after 35 years or so and it is not possible to determine the gender until this event. Male clones such as Mayfield, Saratoga and Tremonia are disappointing in their lack of vigour. Lakeview and Princeton Sentry are the pick of the male types but remain difficult to grow, rarely come to market and command a tidy premium."*

The topiary roof form *Platanus x hispanica* 'Malburg' should make an attractive feature provided the annual 'trim and train' regime is maintained. Regrettably, experience of other schemes makes everyone very sceptical that this will happen beyond the initial establishment period, and it should be remembered that the need for cyclical pruning was one of the reasons cited against Armada Way's former street trees.

Although not directly related to the regeneration of Armada Way, the consultation materials include this statement: *"In addition to this scheme, we are currently working on plans for a separate new urban-forest project (a small, dense patch of trees planted closely together). This would be an additional 147 trees planted in the south of Armada Way (outside the Crowne Plaza) and would form part of the new administration's pledge to increase tree canopy cover across the city centre. Detailed information regarding the proposed urban-forest outside the Crowne Plaza will be published when this project is further developed."*

This illustrates how the design process has been opaque, not only for Armada Way but also for every other public realm project. It is a systemic failing and requires urgent resolution because the current practice of publishing fait-accompli plans when there is very little scope to influence them leaves people angry or apathetic, neither of which is good for an engaged society. Enlarging the stakeholder base to include relevant constituted groups from the outset would be one way to address this.

We conjecture that the small dense patch being proposed for the Crowne Plaza area would be a 'Miyawaki forest' although no further details are available. Whilst we welcome the ambition and scale of such planting, we believe in the guiding principle of 'right tree, right place' and have serious reservations whether this can be achieved on a site that lies between two existing formal tree rows which frame views to the Naval War Memorial and set within a Grade II listed registered park and garden. Miyawaki forests were developed in Japan to recolonise post-industrial land, and this has also informed their use elsewhere. The system has not been trialled in the UK for its long-term prospects in typical public-realm settings.

Meetings have been offered as part of this consultation and we request one be arranged to discuss options for:

- Reducing the area of hard surfacing.
- Increasing tree cover.
- Addressing the area in front of the Crowne Plaza.

Penny Tarrant

Chair

30<sup>th</sup> October 2023