

## **What the Council say vs the facts**

**We are being presented with a binary choice – this design or the loss of all funding and the death of our city centre!**

We must demand that a completely new design is drawn up – a design which starts with the trees. £10 million of the Armada Way project is coming from the council's own money. £2.7 million is from the Department for Transport. The DfT have told us that money is not necessarily lost if there are deliverable issues but they must be consulted with. PCC have not told the DfT about potential changes to the design because they don't intend on changing it. They have already gone back to the design to see if any trees can be kept and they found 7 more. If this was all that can be saved in this design, they need a new one.

**“Local businesses are positive about the plan”**

We have surveyed a number of local businesses and they tell us that they want the redevelopment to go ahead. They want “A plan”, not “this plan”. This is what we all want. Most in fact told us that they would prefer a design which kept more trees.

**“The public consultation was thorough and 83% of people approved of the plan”**

The public consultation in 2018 was reasonably extensive. But, and it's a big but... There was not *one* question on the survey relating to trees, so how can they know what the people think about keeping their trees? In essence there has been zero public consultation about the trees. The information they put out does not make it remotely clear that so much of Armada Way will be bulldozed. We met with the planning team on November 3<sup>rd</sup> and they told us that at a public presentation in September 2022 that “everybody that attended apart from two people were behind the plans”. That's odd because we have spoken to dozens who went and voiced their dislike for it and were generally disregarded.

**“The trees planted will be mature and 7-8m tall” this was the original claim, it was then 6-8m, it’s now 5-8m.**

23% will be of a girth (circumference) of 35-40cm and these could be 7-8m tall. The majority, 77% will only have a girth of 20-25cm - close to that of a tennis ball.

**“Half of the trees are damaging the built environment”**

This is very misleading. The council’s tree survey showed that 42% of all the trees in town have or will cause minor damage to the built environment. This figure **does not** pertain to Armada Way. Plus, much of this damaged could be mitigated with better design. Only 26% on Armada Way are showing signs of either damage **OR** a potential for damage at **SOME POINT** in the future. Half have had no effect on the built environment and the other 24% have or may in the future cause minor damage but this is mitigatable.

**“The soil that the trees are in is no good/the trees are planted on a road”**

The **very** limited soil survey was done after the decision to chop down all the trees so this could not have been the reason to remove them. Most of the trees for the chop are being felled because they do not fit the design, but that they are an inconvenience. Some of the trees are likely in soil which is not ideal but anyone can see that they are fine and the council’s tree survey shows that most (83%) of the trees on Armada Way will last 20 to 40 years, much longer with the right maintenance. Most were not planted just after the war, they were planted in the 1980s. The road only ran down the side of Armada Way - most of the trees are in the middle and the people who did the last work were not idiots.

**“We need to remove the trees to install SUDs (Sustainable Urban Drainage System)”**

Rubbish. SUDs can be retrofitted to areas with mature existing trees. It’s harder and more expensive but it can be done. This has never been explored – do not be taken

in that the trees must be felled to solve the drainage problem in the city centre. The reason the council don't want to completely re-do the plan is because they have run the clock down on a funding deadline, not because this design is the only one possible.

**“There will be a 25% biodiversity net gain”**

Perhaps there will - but this is not planned to be achieved for 30 years and will only be reached if the area is well maintained and none of the trees die (which some will). Other environmental markers have not been considered at all such as air quality, tree canopy cover which helps keep the area cool in the summer and mitigate against the effects of the wind. The council has **not** conducted an Air Quality Assessment, a Tree Canopy Cover Survey, a bird or exhaustive bat survey or an Environmental Impact Assessment. Because the council have got the scheme through under Permitted Development (PD) rules they do not need to follow any of their own environmental policies. If they had had to apply for planning permission to do this, they would have been denied.

Planting trees elsewhere will not provide local people and shoppers with the benefits of being near mature trees including urban cooling in the summer, mitigation against the wind tunnel effect, wider mental health benefits. Mature trees reduce crime and increase sales for local businesses.

**“The majority of the trees are reaching the end of their natural lives”**

This is rubbish - the tree survey shows that many of the trees for the chop are early mature or semi mature. They are mostly (two thirds) Category B which means they are of moderate quality and have 20+ years remaining contribution, probably a lot longer with good maintenance. Even the category C trees have been recorded to live 10+ years.

All of the 24 trees they are keeping are Category B. A second classification goes on to describe 86% of the trees as either Young, with Long Retention (40+ years) or Medium Retention (15-40 years). Urban trees do tend to not live as long as they could but seeing as how the life expectancy for many of the trees is hundreds of

years, to say that a load of trees planted 35 years ago are all on the verge of death is utter nonsense. The species on Armada Way have wildly varying life expectancies (from 40 – 800 years) and they want us to believe that they will all be coming to the end of their lives at the same time at the age of around 40! How stupid do they think we are!?

Only 7 trees were rated as dead or diseased on the tree survey and only 2 were mentioned to have canker. None were noted to be dangerous.

**“We are doing it to make Armada Way more sustainable”**

The council like to use the word sustainable which can simply mean that something can be maintained for a period of time to a similar standard. Environmentally sustainable is quite different and the unnecessary replacing of anything just because you can is the exact opposite of environmentally sustainable. Mature trees will be far more resilient to changes in climate than young trees which will require increased maintenance (especially watering) for 3 to 5 years.

They are cutting down the trees because they have drawn up a plan which they did not check the public approved of and now they have to rush it through to receive funding to cover money they have already spent. Make no mistake, the decision to chop down the trees is about money. They didn't bother conducting a thorough feasibility study into keeping the trees because they thought they could get away with it and nobody would care. Now they are being challenged on their plan, they are justifying it however they can. It is always species dependent, but as a rule trees do not start to sequester carbon at significant levels until they are mature, at around 30 years. Many of the trees we have on Armada Way are at their most effective at doing this now. We need trees to absorb carbon dioxide and improve our air quality now, not in 30 years when it's too late.

**“We want to reinstate the link from North Cross to the Hoe, taking it back to the Abercrombie Plan”**

This is ridiculous. The Abercrombie plan was drawn up in the 1940s and cannot reflect the environmental or social demands for the people of Plymouth today. The “view” will not be achievable due to the large trees they have decided to keep outside Council House and Citadel Road. When the plan was drawn up, Armada Way was road up either side with lawn in between. Who would prefer that to an interesting and

varied urban park with mature trees. Additionally, the council conveniently forget about the Abercrombie plan when they want to knock down 4 or 5 storey brick buildings (of the type Abercrombie insisted we have) to be replaced by towering, plastic-clad student blocks and malls.

**“There will be double the number of healthy trees” and “it will be much greener”**

There won't.

Armada Way (from Royal Parade to North Cross) had 153 trees. The final design has 174. That's 14% more. It could not get more green! The tree canopy cover will be reduced.

The trees in the visuals are at least 30 years old. Why don't they show us visuals from 2025? As previously mentioned they will be tiny by comparison and many of which are intended to be fastigate (tall and thin) so won't give much shade or be able to mitigate the effects of wind like a full canopy tree.

**“Right tree, right place” and “we are only planting native trees”**

They say that the replacement trees will be better suited to the urban environment but sadly this is not completely true. Mature trees are much better at dealing with the unpredictable effects of climate change and the new trees won't be large for decades. The right tree in a right place is where the tree happens to be growing.

The varieties and sizes they can buy are really limited (partly due to Brexit and strict import laws) so they will be planting few native trees. Some varieties have too wide a canopy or are too large for how close they are planning on planting them together.

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