

Letter to all Councillors January 2022

Dear Councillor,

I am writing to you as the founder of the STRAW campaign regarding the situation on Armada Way as it stands now. Our petition has now reached 11,000 signatories.

We were delighted when the pause in felling was allowed but feel as though the opportunity it represented is being lost as time goes on.

I understand that there are pressures on you as councillors, pressures I would like to understand better. I have been very disappointed with the lack of dialogue since November, with us and local stakeholder groups like Plymouth Tree Partnership, and Environment Plymouth. I feel it would have been so beneficial if everyone's positions could have been understood at an earlier stage. We are not demanding the redevelopment be stopped and we are not demanding that all the trees be saved. We approach this realistically and realise that compromises can be made on both sides.

I am writing to you now to appeal to you as a Plymothian - whether you were born here or, like me, have lived here long enough to feel that Plymouth is home (I don't think that takes very long at all). This year I will be celebrating my 20-year Janniversary. We all want what is best for Plymouth and we all want it to look its best. When we speak to people in town, we often hear them talk fondly about how they remember growing up with these trees or bringing their children to Armada Way to spend time. I truly hope you appreciate the strength of feeling so many people in Plymouth have for these trees. Trees I feel we are very lucky to have, a real asset which we should be doing everything we can to keep.

I understand that the council are still reviewing the plans but it would appear from the recent article in Plymouth Live written by PCCC and information coming from the Knowledge Centre that the plans are likely to have minor tweaks in order to keep a very small amount of additional trees at best. I really feel as though the council are missing an opportunity to listen and be seen to listen. The choice being presented to local people and local businesses is for some reason entirely binary - the current plan or the death of the high street. Why are these the only choices? The pause began nearly 2 months ago and we could have been presented with an alternative choice by now. Plymouth Tree Partnership sent in their report of a potential "Better Way" and while it was acknowledged, there was no further response to it. There is more than one way to skin a cat as they say, and another design which incorporates many (or ideally most) of the trees is possible. Yes, it will be delayed but then that is clearly not unusual, and wouldn't it be worth it? To have an Armada Way everyone can be proud of, which upholds the green credentials and policies of PCC. A fantastic new design which starts with the trees and has been approved by the people.

We have spoken to the Department for Transport and it is clear that if projects are delayed or have issues with delivering the agreed design then the funding is not necessarily lost. Quite the opposite in fact:

they say "The majority of TCF cities have requested some changes to their programme. Where possible, the Department has supported TCF cities to navigate through the change control process". I wonder whether the DfT were approached, given the considerable, unplanned delays to the work on New George Street and Old Town Street.

I could go on about the condition of the trees and the various and wide-ranging benefits we get from mature trees (specifically mature trees, not just trees) but I imagine you have heard it before. As I said, I wanted to write to you to appeal to you as a constituent.

Please consider an alternative to all or nothing. We are ready to talk when the council are.

Thank you for reading.

Best regards,

Alison White

STRAW Plymouth and Plymouth resident