

MEMBER'S WRITTEN QUESTION



Member submitting the question: Charlotte Holloway

Date received: 10/24/2022 7:55:31 AM

To the Cabinet Member for: Deputy Leader and Finance and Economy: Cllr Mark Shayer

Question: To ask the Cabinet member for the Economy, what plans the city centre has to remove trees as part of the Armada Way renewal programme, and whether there will be any consultation on these plans?

Answer:

No one here takes the decision to remove trees lightly. Our initial request from the design team was to see how many healthy trees with good longevity could be kept, while creating the best overall plan for Armada Way. We will plant 147 new trees. This, combined with the other habitats being created by the scheme is a significant biodiversity gain of around of 22 per cent. Indeed, the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) states that whilst there will be a negative impact in the short term to amenity, the replacement of the trees represents a significant investment in the future long term amenity of Armada Way, most notably increasing the resilience of the urban forest centre to a changing climate.

136 trees will be removed – 47 per cent are causing damage to the built environment and 42 per cent causing either minor or visually identifiable damage – mainly because they are trees unsuitable for an urban environment. They were planted in war time rubble, crushed aggregate and concrete, constrained within the 1980s landscaping which has reduced their lifespan due to lack of access to water and nutrients – this is clear from the heave of footways and landscape features

We had a tree survey undertaken in 2017 which showed that all but one tree in the area covered by the Armada Way scheme were classified as Category C – Low quality. We had an updated survey undertaken in 2021 to gain a fuller, more robust assessment of the trees which went above and beyond the British Standard for tree assessment. This was followed by an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). The figures below are from the latest Arboricultural Impact Assessment by YGS.

Tree category	A High quality	B Moderate	C Low quality	U - Unsuitable for retention- dead or dying
Removal	1	77	45 plus two tree groups	11

Other facts from YGS original tree survey (<https://new.plymouth.gov.uk/armada-way>)

- Only 22 per cent of the trees were considered suitable for long term retention
- 17 category A and B trees will be kept. These include the Sweet Gum trees in the Piazza and the large Tree of Heaven outside of the Cophorne Hotel.
- The planting conditions for these will be improved through a new planting specification.
- The new trees will be mature at planting, approximately 7 to 8 metres tall.
- The new trees will be planted with staggered lifespans to enable future replacement in phases so that large scale replacement in a short period of time will not be needed.
- We will look to reuse the timber from felled trees to create natural play spaces in the centre
- We will look to translocate 17 trees where possible and reuse healthy shrubs in our parks
- We will review locations for mitigation planting elsewhere in the city centre and surrounding areas

There was a public information event held on 29th September to review the plans and discuss the rationale for the tree removal and replacement. Around 200 people attended the event, with the majority of feedback being positive, particularly when the issue of the trees and their replacement in the context of the long-term success and sustainability of trees and the green environment along Armada Way. The written feedback has been added to the Council's website. This information event followed from the extensive 19-day consultation with public, stakeholders and Members which showed an 84% positive response to the Armada Way scheme.

Signed:

Date: 21 November 2022

