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Whalley Range Tree Group
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Dear David,

We have now had the opportunity to discuss the outcome of our meeting in full with Whalley Range Residents who have been in touch with the Tree Group with concerns regarding the Tree Management Plan.

The first thing I would like to point out is the significant support the implementation of a Tree Management Plan has across the majority of residents who have been in contact with the group. In addition many residents have expressed positive feedback for the willingness shown by the Council to take on board the feedback from residents and consider the concerns raised.

We have completed a detailed review of all the documents sent and discussed in detail all aspects of the plan including the outcome from our recent meeting and the following is an attempt to summarise the aspirations of the wider Tree Group. The feedback is organised into seven main areas as follows:

- 1. Background to group**
- 2. Importance of Tree Stock for Whalley Range and surrounding areas**
- 3. Support being offered by Tree Group**
- 4. Felling Plan Design**
- 5. Replacement Planting and Additional Planting Strategy**
- 6. Tree Maintenance Approach including impact on pavements / kerbs**
- 7. Proposal for the year 2011**

1. Background to group

Whalley Range Forum has been working with Council departments and other organisations since 1995 to promote the well-being of the community and environmental sustainability. This work included the development of a local management plan which outlined the forerunner of the current tree strategy. Local residents have therefore encouraged and supported the development of a tree strategy which would maintain, and develop a healthy stock of street trees to enhance visual amenity and the character of our historic (conservation) area, encourage wild life habitats and mitigate against climate change.

The Whalley Range Tree group was initially facilitated by WR Forum and is now a separately functioning group of local residents.

The group wishes to preserve as many trees as possible and to raise awareness amongst residents that there is a sustainable management plan for the trees in Whalley Range so that changes occur in a measured manner.

The areas for action and discussion as set out in this document draw on the Manchester City Council Tree Strategy (2010) and are in line with the Council Climate Change Action Plan (2009) and Green City plan.

2. Importance of Tree Stock for Whalley Range and surrounding areas

The group believes the trees should be considered as an essential asset of the Whalley Range Conservation Area and should be managed accordingly. The group urges that a value be assigned to each tree in a range of ways in order to ensure proper consideration is given to the following benefits:

- Countering of climate change through CO₂ absorption.
- Reduction of impact of severe weather including mitigation of flood risk and enhancement of effectiveness of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems.
- Moderating of temperatures - by reflecting sunlight, providing shade and evaporating water through transpiration.
- Moderation of local microclimates – urban areas with trees are cooler in summer and warmer in winter and well-positioned trees can improve the environmental performance of buildings, reducing thermal gain in summer.
- Enhancement of biodiversity.
- Improvement of air quality by cutting the levels of airborne particulates and absorbing nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone.
- Higher property values - The positive impact of broadleaved woodland on property prices is well known, with increases in property values ranging from 5 – 18%. The larger the trees are then the greater their proportional value.
- Provision of substantial health benefits – pollution reduction, traffic noise mitigation and mental health benefits (symptoms of anxiety, depression and insomnia have been proven to be alleviated).

This asset value should be set against the cost of on-going maintenance so that it can be clearly seen that the true value of this asset is recognised and understood.

[http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-casefortrees.pdf/\\$FILE/eng-casefortrees.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/eng-casefortrees.pdf/$FILE/eng-casefortrees.pdf)

The Tree Group urges the Council to recognise the important contribution made by trees to the environment and to commit to the responsible and sustainable custodianship of this resource on any land that it owns or influences. Whether a financial value is put to them or not, the trees should be recognised as making a contribution to both the perceived and real value of property and business in the area.

3. Support being offered by Tree Group

The Tree Group hopes to work in tandem with the Council and provide support for the implementation of a successful Tree Management Plan through the following:

- Development of electronic mapping of tree stock to be used to support Felling, Replanting and Advanced Planting Plan design.

- Identification of opportunities for accessing alternative funds / grants to support planting of additional replacement trees over and above the numbers identified in the Tree Management Plan.
- Identification of sites for additional tree planting.
- Identification of opportunities to work with the Council and Community to encourage a system of “New Tree Adoption” and thus enhance the probability of replacement tree survival.
- Development of communication link to Whalley Range Residents to optimise the potential for support of the plan.

4. Felling Plan Design

Selection of trees for felling

Residents urge that a defined strategy is developed and communicated effectively in the selection of trees for felling. Consideration to be given to:

- Relative tree health ascertained using appropriate scientific equipment.
- Degree of canopy cover on each individual road (or stretch of road) i.e. that trees to be felled, where feasible, should not be in close proximity to each other.
- Rate of felling to be redefined in reference to the revised time span for the plan.
- As discussed and consistent with the Manchester Tree Strategy, pavement damage, kerb damage and tree size should not be viewed as sufficient rationale for selecting trees for felling. All other options should be reviewed to address the problems presented.

Residents believe that each tree should be viewed individually, and the stock as a whole should be viewed collectively, as an asset to the community and felling should be viewed as an option of last resort.

Appendix 1 outlines the output from an independent review of a sample selection of the trees identified for felling in the Yr2 supplemental survey provided at our recent meeting. As can be seen there are a number of trees which appear to be in a more significant state of decline and many trees where the independent assessment appears to be inconsistent with the statistics reflected in the Council supplemental survey document. Residents are concerned to ensure that appropriate methods, sufficient resources and appropriate equipment are used to assess and record tree health.

Timeframe of the plan

Residents urge that the Timeframe of the Felling Plan is revisited to give full consideration to the following:

- Detailed assessment of the expected life of the Whalley Range Tree Stock utilising the appropriate scientific measurement methods.
- Review of latest academic research into average lifespan of the relevant species in an urban setting.
- Provision of statistics charting the distribution of tree decline in an equivalent setting where trees of a similar species have been planted within the same time frame.

- Detailed ecological and environmental assessment.

Residents are keen to ensure a co-ordinated approach to the Tree Management Plan with other agencies, especially planning, to ensure that application of Tree Preservation Orders and Felling Licenses are consistent with the overall plan design.

5. Replacement Planting and Additional Planting Strategy

A brief survey of the area indicates that there are a number of streets currently with no trees, some with few trees, some with limited canopy cover and others with gaps where earlier removals have no surviving replacement.

- Residents recognise that not every apparent space on a piece of pavement is suitable for tree planting and accept that other factors have to be taken into account (such as underground services, overhead wires, nearby garden trees, property access requirements and residents' views in the immediate vicinity).
- Residents urge the Council to consider every suitable opportunity to advance plant and under-plant where existing canopy cover can be shown to have no potential detrimental impact on newly planted trees. As indicated previously, the Tree Group offers support in identification of potential sites through a mapping development project and also support in the application for and securing of additional funding to support supplemental planting.
- The volume of new tree plantings should be defined utilising latest academic research on the relative contribution made by a mature tree and a newly planted young tree in relation to combating CO₂ omissions, water run-off and potential flood damage. In addition consideration should be given to the relative health benefits afforded by mature vs. newly planted young trees including protection of residents from harmful ultra-violet rays;
- Residents have fed back where there are a number of concerns that replanting numbers for Yr1 fellings do not match those indicated on the survey.
- Residents urge that planting methods utilise latest research to ensure optimisation of tree survival and minimisation of impact on pavements / kerbs etc. in future years.
- Residents urge that the species for replacement are chosen with full consideration of the following
 - Future replication of current tree canopy stature.
 - Ability to support existing biodiversity.
 - Compatibility with an urban street setting in terms of trunk size, height and canopy cover (may differ depending on individual street / pavement dimensions)

6. Tree Maintenance Approach

- Residents urge that latest research and methods are used to optimise the potential success of new tree planting and maximisation of mature tree life spans.
- Residents have expressed concerns regarding the impact of the application of impervious paving surfaces in close proximity to tree bases and the resultant potential increased risk of root damage to pavements and kerbs.

- Residents urge that a statement of good practice is developed for Utilities Companies to minimise the distress caused to mature tree and new tree planting during maintenance works.
- Residents are keen to ensure that all options are identified and explored for overcoming the problems of root exposure, pavement and kerb damage and tree size relative to pavement width and that tree felling is not viewed as a viable option for addressing the issues presented.

7. Proposal for the year 2011

Given the following facts:

- the scale of the proposal is extraordinary – it involves the removal of a majority of the area's mature street trees
- many people feel communication from the Council has been insufficient – such a large programme calls for a careful and extensive communication strategy
- there are high levels of reservation expressed by residents – people are unhappy about the initial phases of the existing management plan (in relation both to communication and to implementation)
- altogether this has generated some strong negative feelings – residents have expressed feelings of dismay, doubt, concern, uncertainty, disempowerment and lack of confidence in the work being done

We ask that the plan for 2011 (5% of the plan timescale) be altered as follows:

- hold meeting as agreed between the group and council officers to see what can be done in relation to specifically identified issues of tree condition and pavement management
- maximise the advance-planting work making use of the existing opportunities to replace previously felled trees and to populate previously un-planted stretches of road
- put back (defer) the felling programme by one year, only removing trees where there is a clear case for felling on grounds of safety
- engage with residents to improve communication, trust and understanding over the details of the plan as it affects future years
- develop any revisions to the tree strategy to incorporate residents' input and support for an autumn 2011 re-launch

Yours sincerely,

Rionne Avis
pp Whalley Range Tree Group