

Wiltshire Council

Council

8 November 2011

Officer Response to Petition – Felling of Trees, Salisbury

Petitions raised concerning the trees in the Market Place with a reported 11,485 signatories which state:

“We the undersigned disagree totally with the plan to needlessly fell the trees in Salisbury Market Place as in plan number S/2011/0520 and to replace them with 17 immature trees. We feel the trees add immeasurably to the character of the Market Place and any destruction of these trees is a retrograde step, and we oppose this plan without reserve.”

‘We the undersigned object to the felling of the trees in Salisbury Market Square and the Guildhall Square. Furthermore we do not believe felling is necessary and regard that an independent enquiry report be obtained’.

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with background information about the Salisbury Area Board’s response to a petition raised concerning trees in the Salisbury Market Place and action taken to date.

Background to the Salisbury Vision refurbishment of the Market Place

2. The refurbishment of the Market Place was part of Salisbury Vision’s overall plans to improve Salisbury (which included the Maltings). It had been agreed that refurbishment was required in the Market Place to match the investment being made by regional competitors in other city centres. Proposals had been designed to address a number of issues, by improving lighting, replacing the current poor quality surfacing, and providing a more flexible space. The principle of this development was supported by the business community, including the Federation of Small Businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, and the City Centre Management.
3. A design competition undertaken in 2009, had included the retention of the existing trees. However, following specialist advice on trees and sub-surfaces, a decision was taken to replace the trees. This was to prevent the roots damaging the new surfaces, blocking drains, and also as some of the trees had been allowed to grow too large obscuring the buildings behind.

4. In response to the above petition which had received over 8,400 signatures, an item of was included on the Salisbury Area Board's agenda of 15 September, 2011. The overall aim was to enable petitioners to have their say, officers from Salisbury Vision to provide information and for the public to join the debate.

5. The debate was followed by a Decision:

'Because of the considerable public concern being expressed over the current planning application for the Market Place, in particular the petition in respect of the replacement of the trees, the Area Board respectfully requests that the planning applications (S/2011/1320, S/2011/1321 and S/2011/1322) not be taken to Committee for determination until such time as the situation regarding the trees is fully understood, through further liaison with the Wiltshire Tree Officer and other professional advisors as necessary.'

'We would like to work with the Vision Board and arrange for the issues to be fully debated in public at an Extraordinary meeting of the Salisbury Area Board, to be arranged for the purpose, once the outcome of this further advice on the trees is known.'

6. Minutes from that meeting also contain excerpts from the debate which included a view expressed that although 8,500 signatures to the petition was a significant number, 38,500 had not signed the petition. In response to this, the Salisbury Area Board designed an on-line survey www.goo.gl/AeLEz and disseminated this to a network of over 1,500 Salisbury individuals and organisations in its community area who had previously signed up to the Board, including all schools, young people's networks and requesting organisations to forward the survey onto its own networks. All Area Board's in the south, that is, Amesbury, South West, Southern, Tidworth and Warminster were also requested to disseminate the survey to their contacts. Press releases and articles were published notifying of the survey including the Salisbury Journal and Spire FM radio. Hard copies of the survey were held in Salisbury Library and Wiltshire Council's offices in Milford Street for members of the public who did not have access to the internet.

7. An extraordinary meeting of the Salisbury Area Board was held on 10 October, 2011 to feedback the results of the survey, invite questions and comments from the public as referenced in the survey, i.e., trees, car parking, war memorial, public toilets and resurfacing of the Market Place. Over 200 people attended this meeting.

8. The Decision made at this meeting was that the planning applications for the refurbishment of the Market Place be withdrawn and that the Salisbury Area Board would oversee the delivery of improving the Market Place while the Salisbury Vision would focus on larger projects.

9. The Salisbury Area Board invited local people onto a community working group to be made up of representatives from both the Salisbury City Council and Laverstock & Ford Parish Council, Salisbury Chamber of Commerce, City

Centre Management, Salisbury City Community Area Partnership, Salisbury Arts Festival, market traders, the SOS Trees group, disabled users forums and other interested parties. The aim of the group was to examine all the issues and help draw up proposals for the future of the Market Place. Responses from the survey and the community working group would be used by the Area Board to ask architects to draw up new plans.

10. A series of meetings is planned and the first meeting was held on 24 October, 2011 attended by 35 people. Proposals from this working group will be presented to the Salisbury Area Board at its 17 November, 2011 meeting to be held at The Guildhall, Salisbury.

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