**FOPP**

Planning application objection evidence 23/4152M.

Referring only to Amenity Value and the Independent Report of systemic failures of process in a project in Sheffield which failed to balance trees felling with public benefit. Other areas of evidence are not addressed here.

I object because

1 The design process does not balance properly the requirements of safety with those of the amenity value of the area and its woodland to the people of Poynton.

When the proposals were designed the evidence of amenity value was not known and data was not collected ahead of the project specification designs being created. Thus the technical designs for the project are significantly flawed.

Evidence for this is: -

The project designs require the removal of many trees.

These trees are ancient in that there is nobody alive today who knew the site without them.

The trees provide beauty to the area. Many photographs are available to demonstrate this.

The trees act as a playground for families in Poynton

The trees act as a noise and visual defence in the Park from heavy traffic which passes within no more than 5 metres of them.

The people of Poynton have proven the amenity value they place on the trees because: -

* They have held several marches and walks displaying this as the prime purpose.
* A play has been written and performed by Poynton Players AmDram Society which demonstrates how the trees are involved in peoples lives over several generations
* Several public meetings on these proposals have been heavily attended and everyone has objected to the proposals
* An electronic petition has been raised of more than 5000 objectors.
* A paper signature petition has been raised of more than 5000 objectors

(5000 objectors represent about a quarter of all voters in the Poynton which is an unprecedented number for any public participation event in the Town other than voting at a general election and is greater than those voting in recent local elections)

The designs include planting of trees in places other than Poynton and thus have no mitigation of the local loss of amenity.

The high amenity value could not have been known to project designers initially because none of this evidence was known beforehand.

2 The plans do not resonate with the stated Council policy and aspiration of moving towards carbon neutrality. These are ancient mature trees and are now removing CO2 from the atmosphere to the maximum extent they can. Planting of immature trees in their early years adds CO2 to the atmosphere and it may be twenty years before that turns to net removal of CO2 from the atmosphere.

3 Evidence of a failed project in respect of removal of high amenity value trees not being given appropriate weight in the processes which produced the design.

A good template in available from the independent report of a project in Sheffield which has the common features of safety considerations producing project designs to remove trees and loss of amenity value.

The full report is at

[Sheffield Street Trees Inquiry](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/sheffield_street_trees_inquiry_report.pdf)

The whole report is relevant in some dimensions. Relevant extracts are; -

P8 Senior officers with direct responsibility and governing politicians in the Council genuinely thought that delivering the programme as designed was in the best interests of the city and proceeded accordingly. Decision-makers in the Highways team strongly believed that sticking comprehensively to the standards of infrastructure specified in the contract was appropriate. The Council’s legal leadership focused on what the Council was entitled to do, and failed to pose questions of what would work or what it was right or proportionate to do

P12 Item 4 But the approach to street trees was flawed. The provision to remove and replace 17,500 trees, about half the total in the city, was misjudged**. It largely ignored the value of street trees. It failed to anticipate the views of significant numbers of people across Sheffield.**

P12 Item 5 **Developing and then adopting a flawed plan was a failure of strategic leadership**. Responsibility for that rests primarily with senior Council officers and senior politicians in the administrations of the governing groups between 2008 and 2012.

P14 Item 1 The Council should apologise for developing and adopting a flawed plan.

P14 Item 2 Amey (the Engineers note of explanation added by GT) should also recognise, and apologise for, its part in developing the flawed plan.

16.

P13 Item 16 a, Senior officers directly responsible for the highways and the contract **believed strongly in the** **programme they were delivering,** and did not want even limited compromises in the standards of built infrastructure to allow a larger number of healthy trees to be saved. They wanted their political masters to continue with the programme as it was designed and failed to do enough to develop alternatives.

P13 Item 16 b. The Council’s in-house lawyers focused on what legal action it was entitled to take. Better legal practice would have been to ask more questions about whether the legal action contemplated would, in practice, have the intended effect of deterring the protesters, and encourage consideration of alternative approaches when it became clear that it was not doing so**. It would have been better practice to have questioned whether all the legal steps the Council took were a reasonable and proportionate use of its authority. A more rounded approach should have been taken to advising on the Council’s problems.**