

Kirkbymoorside Town Council
Information for meeting on 16 July 2018

9 18/00599/CAT | Notice to Fell Trees in a Conservation Area | Fell 2 Silver Birch | 43 Penny Piece & 48 Piercy End Kirkbymoorside YO62 6DQ

Observations submitted by residents

With reference to your notice to residents dated 26th June 2018 and regarding the trees on Piercy End and High Market place I would like to make the following points.

It seems ironic that in the same month that the government announced the appointment of Sir William Worsley as UK 'tree champion' with a remit which includes stopping the unnecessary cutting down of street trees by local authorities, his own local authority (NYCC) submits an application to cut down trees just a few miles from his home!

The two Silver Birch trees on Piercy End

I agree with the town council that the presence of the trees does enhance the appearance of the town so the preferred option is to retain the existing trees for as long as possible in line with the recommendation of the Ryedale District Council tree and countryside officer. He suggests the option of crown thinning the trees to reduce the risk of fracture but as both tree officers agree there has been poor pruning in the past it is important to stress that the work should be carried out by someone with relevant experience rather than just the cheapest tender. Unfortunately there are many contractors who will undertake work on trees but do not necessarily have the skill and knowledge to do this in an appropriate way that will enhance the appearance of the tree.

The NYCC tree and countryside officer suggests replacing the existing silver birch trees with columnar Hornbeam trees. By this I presume he means *Carpinus betulus* 'Fastigiata', a cultivar of the hornbeam which has a more upright flame shaped canopy, but I feel that this is not an appropriate tree for our main street. The hornbeam has become popular as a street tree but it is very solid with a dense canopy which would appear very dominant in our narrow historic streets. The native silver birch, *Betula pendula*, has the advantage of being a slim tree with small leaves and an elegant drooping canopy which provides dappled shade and blends well into the streetscape of a historic market town without detracting from the buildings around it. It also has the advantage of putting down deep roots to access water and nutrients which means it is very well anchored in the ground and is regarded as not at risk of disturbing surrounding pavements and road surfaces with shallow roots (Woodland Trust). The silver birch is also known to support over 300 species of insects which makes them a more desirable tree to plant at a time when there is growing concern about the apparent 70% reduction in our insect population.

Silver Birch tree on High Market Place.

I disagree with the idea of removing and replacing the tree in High Market Place. Although it may not have grown much in the past ten years, the trunk has certainly thickened and it is healthy and stable. Unfortunately the metal frame around it has not been maintained and is now partially embedded in the trunk of the tree. The tree has accommodated this by forming a callus around the metal so the best option would be to carefully remove the existing metal frame but cut off those pieces of metalwork actually embedded in the tree and leave them in place then put up a new larger guard if desired. If the tree was removed then any replacement would be substantially smaller and take 10 years or more to be an effective replacement so would not enhance the appearance of our main street for a considerable number of years. Government policy is now not to remove healthy trees, 2 tree officers agree it is healthy, so why remove it?

Trees in large planters

There are currently 2 large black planters on Piercy End containing trees. Both of these trees appear to be Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*) and neither looks to be thriving although the tree on the western side of the street is marginally better.

Street trees will never grow successfully in planters unless they are very carefully managed with regular skilled attention needed. A tree relies on a symbiotic relationship with soil organisms in order to obtain the water and nutrients it requires to remain healthy and grow. This is difficult to provide in a container because the soil available is limited and quickly becomes depleted leaving the tree stressed and vulnerable to disease. This is why even 'dwarf' trees designed for growing in pots have quite a short life expectancy. The restricted space also causes the tree to be less stable, any tree relies on its ability to put roots deep in the earth and over a considerable distance in order to give it the stability needed to balance the upper canopy and resist extremes of weather.

I would suggest a better option is to explore the possibility of planting perhaps 3 or 4 more native silver birch (*Betula pendula*) directly into the earth along our main street. This would require the digging of a suitable hole but would not take up any more street space than putting large black containers in the same places. Instead of buying containers the money could be spent on providing decorative metal tree guards for the new trees. I am sure that if NYCC could be persuaded to allow us to do this there are several local people with the knowledge and interest to take on the role of monitoring the trees and looking after them so there would be no extra cost to NYCC though we may need to do a little local fundraising from time to time.

I am sure the presence of several appropriate trees could enhance the historic buildings in our town centre.

I have read the recommendations of the local authorities about the three trees in the centre of Kirkbymoorside.

I am opposed to the NYCC recommendation that the two birch trees in Piercy End should be removed and possibly the third birch tree located in High Market Place.

I find the moderate response of RDC Tree and Countryside Officer more helpful because it offers possibilities for retaining and caring for the trees and will allow planning time for a strategy to enhance the streetscape of Kirkbymoorside by the addition of new trees.

I am pleased that Kirkbymoorside Town Council prefers the recommendation to retain the trees for as long as possible and they also agree that that the streetscape throughout the town centre would be improved with the introduction of more trees.

The three trees would most certainly be missed. They are the only trees left and provide a pleasant visual amenity amidst all the cars parked all the way up the street. Kirkby in Bloom, local residents and businesses have put a lot of time and effort into making the centre of the town a colourful and attractive environment. It would be a shame to lose the trees.

The thing that could be improved in my view, in addition to some care and attention for the trees, is the base of the tree in High Market Place. It is full of weeds that are hard to pull out. Several attempts have been made to get rid of them at Town Tidy Up events. Perhaps some alternative solution could be found.

