

Statement for website/social media 27.05.2022

Rushmoor Development Partnership committed to green town centre

The Rushmoor Development Partnership (RDP) would like to reassure residents that it is committed to keeping the impact of any tree loss to a minimum as part of its regeneration proposals for Farnborough's Civic Quarter.

This follows concerns raised by local people about the RDP's outline planning application for the Civic Quarter, which is with Rushmoor Borough Council for consideration.

As an outline planning application, it sets out the design principles for this important town centre regeneration site, which stretches from the Sulzers roundabout in the west across to the Pinehurst car park and council offices in the east and includes the former leisure centre, police station and community centre sites as well as the library and Westmead House. The full proposals for each part of the scheme will come forward at a later date as individual, detailed planning applications.

In developing the design principles for the outline application, we have included a 'worst case scenario' assessment for the number of trees that could need to be removed across the whole site. In reality, our preferred option is to keep as many trees as possible and we expect this figure to be less.

The outline planning application includes proposals to improve the pedestrian and cycling network around the town centre, as well as a new T-junction to replace the Pinehurst roundabout. Many of the trees identified for possible removal are therefore along the side of the elevated road network to the side of Meudon Avenue, Farnborough Road, the Pinehurst roundabout and the access road rising up from Kingsmead. The extent to which trees will need to be removed as a result of the changes to the road system will be subject to further discussions with Hampshire County Council as the Highway Authority.

We understand the way this has been set out in the outline planning application, the estimate for the potential loss of trees sounds alarming. However, we would like to reassure people that we are fully committed to keeping any tree loss to a minimum and that we will be replacing trees where they do need to be removed.

We would also emphasise that this is only an outline application and does not give permission for work to be carried out on any trees. We will consider the trees fully as part of each detailed planning application that will follow in due course.

We recognise the benefit of mature trees outweighs that of newly-planted trees in terms of capturing carbon and in providing natural shade. As the Civic Quarter regeneration scheme will come forward in phases over a number of years, this will give us the opportunity to stagger any tree replacement, so that by the end of the scheme, we have a mix of mature, semi-mature and new trees across the site.

More widely, the RDP is committed to achieving a biodiversity net gain of at least 10 per cent across the Civic Quarter, improving natural habitats and the ecological value of the site, and we are in discussions with the council about how best we can deliver this.