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Sent: 07 July 2026 18:55

To: NCC - Planning <Planning@newport.gov.uk>; Cocks, Steve (Elected Member) <Steve.Cocks@newport.gov.uk>

Subject: Re: Planning application 26/0444 (Ffwrwm, Caerleon) — request for your support for a Tree Preservation Order

Please accept this as our official response for publication in regards to application 26/0444

My name is Councillor Jason Hughes and I am the Cabinet Member for Communities for the city of Newport. I have visited Caerleon for over three decades and have lived here almost 15 years. I am a keen local historian and have sat on numerous historical and community groups for more than a decade. The significance of this is that I have a strong local knowledge and community understanding of the area and as a previous Cabinet Member for the Environment took through the Conservation order we now have in place and have an understanding of the principles that drove this policy and the protections we hoped to gain in the best interest of Caerleon.

I note the application to undertake works to a protected tree group at the Ffwrwm and Caerleon House garden that sits within the Caerleon Conservation area. The application proposes the felling of four trees that by the applicant's own admission have no disease, defect or danger. As a student many years ago, I often came to this space to study and reflect. To many it is a spiritual space as I'm sure the original designer envisaged it would be. To the people of Caerleon it is a place of significance and one of the important features of our community and landscape- visually a place of beauty which adds to the business and recreation value of the site. The trees provide a natural cover and to many it's a place where people come to reflect, relax and contemplate.

There is a rugby ball sculpted into the stone wall and either rumour or historically accurate predates rugby in the town of Rugby and there are many other stories associated with the Ffwrwm that end up in the towns psyche and story and many authors have found inspiration under these trees. Parents bring their children here, as I once did because of the magical spirit rarely found. I have read stories to children there myself and with noted authors and many have said they have gained inspiration from sitting under the canopy of trees, surrounded by sculptures that where once trees themselves.

The importance in regard to this application is that the trees add a significant vibe to the site and as important as the trees are in themselves, they also add to the overall value of the site- something I appreciate the owners may not be fully aware of. I would with the deepest sincerity, strongly disagree with the comments that the trees are of low public value as an amenity- something I am certain many of my fellow residents would concur, if not all of them!

The comments of the Arboriculture officer are worth noting that "topping birch trees is not deemed as good practice"

However, I would also note the comments of the Principal Heritage Officer confirming that the trees stand within the Caerleon Conservation area and scheduled monument area and that

mature trees provide visual and public amenity and form an integral part of the character and appearance of the garden and the wider conservation area. I would entirely agree that the Council should move towards a tree preservation order to protect these trees for future generations.

I would also suggest that while the comments of the tree officer as valid as they are could be superseded by the comments of the Principal Heritage Officer and indeed local elected members who have a more detailed understanding of the conservation, monument and community interests and that these are equally valid if not stronger arguments in relation to this case. The strong views expressed to us by the public we represent are indicative of the public interest in this. I would also argue that granting this application seriously undermines the conservation area objectives something we have all committed to as a community and Council

These types of orders are in place to prevent financially motivated, individual motivation and temporary short-term gains that have the potentially damaging impact on the enjoyment and preservation of important areas for future generations. History only becomes history if it is preserved and mature trees only become mature if they are protected. This is a foundation stone in regard to preservation, and we have an absolute duty to listen to communities about weighing up legislation and public interest. In this case I would argue that both lead me to conclude that this application should be rejected and as such would like to register my objection to this

In 2010 I read this poem that I wrote to a group of children under those very same trees- about those very same trees. To say they mean nothing is upsetting to say the least, but also wrong to an entire community.

The Ffwrwm

Under the shade of trees
Children closed their eyes
And swayed with those leaves
To tales of their past
Where stories of knights and our Celtic families
Entwined with the branches
Next to carved sculptures
Crafted by our modern legends
Memories once made are carried on the ancestors of those trees
That may once have offered shade to Arthur himself
In such places history is preserved
The spirits find sanctuary
Memories float into the future
And in those circles deep under the bark
We touch our own ancestors
And sway together once more.

Their children laugh and dance with ours
And their memories become one

Jason Hughes
Caerleon

Councillor Jason Hughes