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## TREE FOR RAYLEIGH TOWN CENTRE

### 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following an approach from the President of the Chambers of Trade, letters have been received from Rayleigh Town Council and Rayleigh Mill Rotary Club regarding a request for a permanent Christmas tree to replace the memorial tree by the British Legion which is sited in front of Holy Trinity Church in Rayleigh High Street. The tree suggested is an Atlantic Cedar and would be provided free of charge by a local garden centre.

### 2 DISCUSSION

- 2.1 Despite exhaustive enquiries it has not proved possible to identify the owners of the site in question. Any proposal to replace the current tree therefore carries a small element of risk, should the owner be identified at a future date and insists that the land is cleared.
- 2.2 Our Arboricultural Officer has investigated this request and has commented that the church offers an impressive street scene and provides visual amenity for Rayleigh town and any tree planting obscuring this amenity will have a negative impact on the overall appearance of the town.
- 2.3 The tree suggested does establish well in this area; however, due to its anatomy, management would be very difficult. Coniferous trees do not produce a dormant bud and therefore when pruned cannot produce buds from the pruned location like broadleaf trees. Any reduction undertaken tends to leave either dead stubs or a widening of the tree as lower branches are completely removed. Urban trees need to tolerate management because of their location in the urban environment. For this reason, coniferous trees are generally not considered appropriate for urban street planting. This particular species grows very tall, up to ten metres, and has a dense crown that shades ground below.
- 2.4 Rayleigh town already has many established, attractive trees; the large Cedar of Lebanon at the Holy Trinity Church; Beech, Holm Oak and Limes at the Civic Suite and an avenue of London Planes along the High Street. These are typical species of designated conservation areas. The proposed tree is not and will detract from the amenity that is already established. For the reasons identified, officers consider that this particular species would be unsuitable.

### 3 SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES

- 3.1 The Council's Arboricultural Officer has suggested that more suitable alternatives for planting in this vicinity are as follows:-
- Alder
  - Silver Birch

- Lime
- Yew
- Cedar of Lebanon

#### **4 RECOMMENDATION**

##### **4.1 It is proposed that the Committee RECOMMENDS**

That the Council has no objections to the planting of a tree at this location, provided that one of the alternative species suggested in this report be utilised. Further, that the various parties concerned be advised that the Council has been unable to identify the owner of the land in question and that, should they wish to proceed, they would do so at their own risk.

Richard Evans

Head of Environmental Services

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#### **Background Papers:-**

Letters from Rayleigh Town Council and Rayleigh Mill Rotary Club

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If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.