

DEPUTATION TWO – RESIDENTS OF BURLEY PARK

THE LORD MAYOR: Good afternoon and welcome to today's Council meeting. Please now make your speech to Council, which should not be longer than five minutes, and please begin by introducing the people in your deputation.

MS J WEYMONT: Lord Mayor and fellow Councillors, we are residents of Burley Park Area. My name is Judith Weymont and with me is Pauline Scholey and Steve Cook.

The reason we are here is that we have observed the removal of Yorkshire paving stones in our area. We regard Leeds City Council as the Trustee of public resources and as such we would expect consultation on matters affecting our neighbourhood, so we would like to express our serious concern over the removal of Yorkshire paving stones from Burley Park and from Stanmore Hill in particular.

We may not live in a conservation area but we value our neighbourhood. Steve has lived there for more than ten years, I have lived there for more than 30 years and Pauline for more than 35. We resist the Council's attempt to downgrade the area and understand, perhaps wrongly, that paving stones from area such as ours are reassigned to conservation areas or so-called better areas of Leeds.

For those of you not acquainted with Burley Park, we would like to describe it to you. It is an area of high quality back-to-backs with front gardens, redbrick houses with pavements for the most part of Yorkshire paving stones, all of which are over a hundred years old. We are served by a railway station and four regular bus services. We are within walking distance of a range of shop, doctors and dentists, two cinemas and restaurants serving food from all over the world. We are also within reasonable proximity to a Council run sports centre and swimming pool. We have two powerful 'green lungs' in our area, Burley Park itself and Burley Park Model Allotments, which not only improve the wild bird life but provide recreation, exercise, fun and satisfaction to residents.

Residents of Burley Park include teachers, solicitors, working families, artists and musicians, and students. The increase in the student population, notably in the 80s and 90s has now decreased considerably and families and young couples are moving back in to the area. We are suspicious that the image of an itinerant student population has led the Council to disrespect the area, hence the gradual and insidious removal of Yorkshire paving stones.

We would argue that Yorkshire paving stones in Burley Park have stood the test of time. They are sustainable, long-lasting and environmentally friendly. They are in keeping with the surrounding houses and they look good.

We would also argue that tarmac, which seems to be the Council's best attempt at a replacement, is non-sustainable, environmentally unfriendly, being petrochemical in origin and needs regular replacement. None of it will last a hundred years and it is ugly.

We charge Leeds City Council with short termism. There was a time when Yorkshire paving stones were stolen by thieves in the night, so when we first saw the empty pavement on Stanmore Hill, we thought they were back again. It would appear that it is now the Council who, dare we say it, steals in daylight.

Previously when they were stolen by thieves, Leeds City Council would, when asked, replace like with like and secure them. Not that long ago, the Council upgraded parts of Burley Park, notably the Lumleys and the Knowles, replacing cobbles with cobbles and paving stones with paving stones, not tarmac. This was greatly appreciated by residents.

We argue that replacing Yorkshire paving stones with tarmac is not only short termism, it is in the long run uneconomical. Tarmac might, and we have yet to see the evidence, cut costs now, but it increases the expense for the immediate future. Decent maintenance is an investment for now and for the future.

We would like to leave you, as Trustees of public resources with a few questions that we would be grateful if you could answer.

What was the reason for the decision to remove dozens of paving stones from Stanmore Hill in particular and Burley Park in general? Who made that decision? Why was there no consultation with residents? What happens to the removed paving stones? What is the cost comparison for replacing Yorkshire paving stones with tarmac? What plans does the Council have for the future maintenance of pavements and Yorkshire paving stones in particular in the Burley Park area?

Finally, we cannot express too strongly our concern and, yes, anger, at the way in which Burley Park in particular is being treated. We look forward to hearing from you, and would like to wholeheartedly thank you for your time. (*Applause*)

THE LORD MAYOR: Councillor James Lewis.

COUNCILLOR J LEWIS: Thank you. I move that the matter be referred to Executive Board for further consideration.

COUNCILLOR G LATTY: Seconded, Lord Mayor.