



Times Colonist, C4 July 7 1992

John Mackay photos

■ BUSHY London planes have iffy future. City planners want to replace them with smaller trees, but the giants do have champions.

Planners get earful of plain speaking as axe threatens square's plane trees

By Carla Wilson
Times-Colonist staff

The latest logging controversy isn't in a remote watershed up-Island, it's smack in the centre of downtown Victoria.

Current plans call for the two London plane trees in Bastion Square to be cut down as part of the \$930,000 revitalization plan for the historic square.

But a move is afoot to save the trees, which rise above the Maritime Museum of B.C.

"Large attractive trees in the city are very popular with most people," Maureen Watty, who works in a building in the square, said in a letter to the city.

"These trees provide shade in the summer but do not cut out the light in the winter or spring. They blend very well with the old buildings around them."

Linda Carlson of Victoria also said in a letter that there are few large-scale trees in the city.

"We should be respectful of the trees and of those who planned to have future generations enjoy their grandeur and size."

She said the trees' "size and scale enhances the ambience and the setting in character with the details of the buildings around the square."

"Our heritage included large-scale trees. Preserving and respecting our heritage seems hypocritical when we decide to eliminate the trees that have been there just 30 years. Without them, Bastion Square is just another streetscape."

Birds are attracted to the London plane trees, which provide shelter and shade, Carlson said.

Elizabeth Low, downtown planner, said Monday it will be several months before a decision is made on the final design for the central portion of the square. Meanwhile, the trees' future is in limbo.

At this point, the trees are scheduled to be cut down, she said.

Some smaller trees close to Wharf Street have already been removed in the first stage of the revitalization of the square.

"One of the goals of the project is to open the square up and free up that view down toward the water," Low said.

London Plane trees are a poor choice in an urban setting because they have invasive roots which make maintaining services difficult.

The trees are messy and cause problems for nearby property owners because they clog gutters, she said.

"In the past we had people planting trees who really were not trained in selection. Now we have arborists on staff in the parks department so now we are planting trees that are appropriate for their location."

Hornbeam trees, similar to those planted on Langley Street next to the museum, would replace the plane trees, she said.

"They are a smaller tree which can be kept trimmed and pruned so they are in scale to the buildings."



■ BASTION SQUARE gets a new look as part of restoration program. Although this looks like brick, it's phoney — created with a mould which is being employed by city worker Ivano Chelini.