

OXENHOPE ROSE GARDEN

Discussion Paper

Summary

The main 'Christmas tree' in the Rose Garden is unsafe and needs to be removed early in the New Year. Several other invasive cedar trees are in poor condition, crowding the native cherry trees and interfering with telephone lines. The Parish Council are keen to sustainably improve the Rose Garden for the benefit of the village and have received approval from the land owner, Bradford Council, to remove these trees and to re-plant new cherry trees.

Additional Christmas lights are being purchased and plans put forward to develop an attractive central feature to act as a focal point during future festive seasons.

The views of residents are being sought with regard to other proposals, including layout of beds, paths and the re-introduction of roses.

We are also keen, in the longer term, to gauge opinion and support for the transfer of this asset to the Parish Council and to explore whether residents would volunteer to assist in maintenance and planting, or otherwise contribute to the upkeep of this important village feature.

Background

The Rose Garden at Muffin Corner gives an important first impression of Oxenhope to many visitors and is a valuable open green space, in the centre of the village.

The land for the Rose Garden was donated to the former Keighley Borough Council in 1968 by a local family, the Greenwoods, on the basis that the land be used as an Ornamental Garden for the benefit of villagers. Keighley Council did the work in 1972. It was originally very attractive and was laid out as a lawn with rose beds and with a border of 12 Cherry trees and with several other deciduous trees on the western boundary.

Over successive years the standard of maintenance by Bradford Council has reduced dramatically and sadly the Rose Garden is now in a pretty sorry state

and no longer contains a single rose. Government funding cuts and austerity measures inevitably mean that Bradford Council's ability to maintain and improve the site is only going to reduce further.

In addition, the garden has been the subject of repeated vandalism, including damage to the Christmas tree lights in the main Spruce and in the Cherry trees at either side of the site.

Trees

The current 'Christmas tree' planted at the bottom corner of the Garden is a Norway Spruce which was planted 15 to 20 years ago. Currently around 15 metres in height, the tree is a very dominant feature. A fully grown Norway Spruce could reach up to 40 metres.

The tree has developed a "lean" and residents have expressed fears that the tree could fall in high winds, which are frequent in Oxenhope. Bradford MDC have secured the tree with steel guy ropes and ground stakes. On one side of the tree the guy ropes are sagging as the tree has continued to lean further. The steel ropes have cut into the growing tree trunk, causing a weakness. Further up the tree, the main trunk has dissected into two, introducing a further dangerous weak point.

Earlier this year the Parish Council met with officers from Bradford Council to discuss shaping the tree to make it more appropriate for ongoing use as a Christmas Tree. Officers expressed concern about tree safety and as a result the Parish Council commissioned an expert arboriculturalist report from Keighley Trees Ltd. This report confirmed that the tree is in a dangerous condition, in part due to the steel guy ropes and in part to the split trunk.

In view of this, acting on behalf of the Parish Council, Keighley Trees applied for a consent to remove the tree, along with the three cedar conifers on the West Drive frontage. For no discernible reason these trees were planted between the Cherry trees and are deemed to be in very poor condition, not in keeping with the design of the garden and interrupting with adjacent trees and telephone lines. This consent was granted on 13 October.

Although not directly our responsibility, the Parish Council intends to progress these works in the best interests of the village. We also wish to further explore how we can improve the Rose Garden, reversing the decline of recent years.

Christmas Lights

Bradford Council's budget for Christmas Tree lights declined several years ago and the Parish Council has paid for purchase, repair and maintenance of the lights in the village for some years now.

Recent expenditure has included additional lights for the main Christmas Tree in July 2015 (£345) and purchase of further new lights and installation in December 2015 (£688). Following vandalism in 2016, additional illuminations have been purchased and will be installed shortly (£531).

It is noted that the main Christmas tree has grown significantly and it is difficult to create an attractive lighting display as a result.

Creating a more manageable central feature, that could be well lit, and surrounded by attractively lit cherry trees, should present a visually appealing festive focal point for the village.

Vision

Oxenhope Parish Council's vision for the future of the Rose Garden:-

1. Remove the dangerous Norway Spruce Tree early in 2017 immediately after this season's Christmas Light show.
2. Open up the Rose Garden by removing the peripheral conifers.
3. Prune the Cherry trees annually to maintain current heights.
4. Fill the bare areas with more Cherry Trees.
5. Stock the perimeter beds with low height perennial flowering shrubs.
6. The central flower bed is a group of differing Cedar varieties in a central bed. It is proposed to retain this group and trim it into a more conical shape, whilst maintaining the current height. This will then be used as a central focus for the Christmas Light display.
7. Replace the shrubs in the bottom and top flower beds in the central grassed area with new roses OR fill these beds with turf to create much larger grassed areas so that children can play in these areas.
8. Possibly create new chipped bark pathways across the central area to link the existing entrances diagonally across the Garden.

This would give Oxenhope a year-round, attractive open public space as intended by the Greenwood family. Then at Christmas time we would have an

open vista with attractive lights in the Cherry trees, on the edges, leading the eye to the central focal point of a central Conifer Tree arrangement full of lights.

Next Steps

This issue is on the agenda for the November Parish Council Meeting, at the Methodist Chapel in West Drive on 9th November at 7-30 pm. This meeting is open to all villagers.

Views of Parishioners are most welcome. In particular, we would like to hear views on whether to plant the top and bottom beds with roses or to grass these over to make them accessible to all.

In the longer term there is also the question of whether the Rose Garden should be transferred from Bradford Council to Oxenhope Parish Council. Views on this and indications of interest in getting involved are particularly welcome.

Link to online survey: <http://oxenhopeonline.poll daddy.com/s/rose-garden>