Manchester Poplar replacement planting proposals

Michael Craig, Senior Landscape Architect, Manchester Engineering Design Consultancy (MEDC), Manchester City Council, presented planting proposal to Boggart Hole Clough Community Action Trust (BHCCAT) 29.11.07 Executive Committee Open Meeting. A further meeting was arranged for 9.1.08 to enable BHCCAT Members to be consulted more widely about the proposal. MEDC's proposal in the form of a plan of the Clough showing proposed tree locations, and photographs of selected tree species, were forwarded to BHCCAT Members as email attachments and displayed at the Clough Visitor Centre. Email correspondence 9 / 13.12.2007 between Karen Galston and Michael Craig in which the latter explained "the thinking that has gone into this project" was also forwarded to BHCCAT Members.

Feedback from BHCCAT Members indicated a preference for native rather than exotic planting. The table below sets out MEDC's proposal and BHCCAT's preliminary alternative proposal.

Area	MEDC proposal	BHCCAT alternative proposal
1. Both sides of main avenue adjacent to (east of) athletics track	20 Sweet Chestnuts	20 Sessile Oaks
2. Both sides of main avenue towards Lake beyond first car barrier	12 Walnuts	12 Limes
3. Both sides of main avenue beyond second car barrier at junction with White Walk	3 Mulberries & Cedar of Lebanon	4 Yews
4. Around southern Lake perimeter	12 Stone Pines & 5 Turkish Hazels	17 Willows
5. West & south boundary of David Lewis Rec	4 Oriental Planes, 2 Liquidambar Styraciflua Worplesdons, 4 Betula Pendula Tristis Birches, 6 Sessile Oaks & 6 Pin Oaks	This area periphery of Clough unlike areas above. MEDC proposal mixture of natives & exotics. No alternative BHCCAT proposal
Number of trees	75	75

Reasons for BHCCAT Members' preference for native rather than exotic planting are based upon advice & guidance including the following 7 examples.

1. Ecology method statement for removal of Poplar trees at Boggart Hole Clough.
Derek Richardson, Principal Ecologist, Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, 20.12.2006.

"Removal of poplar trees at Boggart Hole Clough; recommended measures to safeguard the ecological value of the site… Boggart Hole Clough is designated as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) in Greater Manchester. The designation is based largely on the important nature conservation value of the woodland in the clough, some of which is identified as Ancient Woodland (NCC 1989)… the mature Manchester poplars on the site do add to its overall nature conservation value and removal of these trees should be undertaken only if considered necessary for reasons of public safety or to avoid the spread of poplar scab disease… Protection of SBI… I would make the following recommendations… Any trees lost should be replaced by planting new trees of appropriate species. Suitable species include oak, silver birch, ash, willow and lime…"

2. Draft Biodiversity Management Plan: Boggart Hole Clough, Blackley, Manchester.
Pat Waring, Director, Ecology Services UK Ltd, 29.6.2007.

"…The plantation of tree species in the existing semi-natural woodland (and on what is believed to be an ancient woodland site) at Boggart Hole Clough has actually led to a reduction in the biodiversity value of the semi-natural woodland through the introduction of non-native or locally uncharacteristic species… High proportion of non-native species in some areas as a result of past planting schemes has led to a reduction in value of semi-natural woodland habitat… The greatest benefit to biodiversity at Boggart Hole Clough would be to manage all woodland so that it maintains or develops characteristics of locally native semi-natural woodland. This is particularly important as the site has been identified as an Ancient Woodland site… oak, birch, ash, willow, rowan, alder, together with hawthorn, elder, holly, hazel and guelder rose, are all species that occur naturally in the field layer… The following objective has been included to provide a simple measure by which the biodiversity health of the woodlands can be assessed. Conservation management should be aimed at working towards reaching favourable condition. Even though favourable condition may be difficult to achieve in the short-term, any progress towards this target is considered to be beneficial in terms of biodiversity: To maintain the lowland broadleaved woodland in favourable condition, where: There is no reduction in the extent of lowland broadleaved woodland… All planting material is of locally native stock…"

3. Manchester Tree Strategy 2006 - 2010.
Manchester City Council, 2006.

"…The species of tree planted can… affect the local character of an area. Planting non-native species in ancient woodland for example, can appear incongruous. Some local areas are recognised by the type of tree planted, and the introduction of a starkly contrasting species may adversely effect visual enjoyment of an area… The priority is to ensure that, at all times, the right species of tree is planted in the right place to protect wildlife and maintain local character… Trees can offer the different areas of Manchester their own 'sense of place'… The types of tree planted can help to define a neighbourhood… In reading the Strategy, it is easy to assume that trees are always good news. However, while trees offer many benefits, they can also be a serious cause of concern. The main ways that trees adversely affect quality of life are: Planting the wrong tree in the wrong place… The biodiversity, aesthetic and amenity value of a tree is affected by its location… In some cases, introduced species may disrupt a stable, biodiverse habitat by out-competing or overshadowing valued species. As such, it is key to plant the right tree in the right place…"

4. Wildabout Manchester Biodiversity Strategy.
Manchester City Council, 2005.

"…The majority of present biodiversity management within the city is uncoordinated… Uncoordinated management include extensive mowing regimes and inappropriate planting schemes. This represents a significant challenge for the city. Consistent and appropriate management practices and regimes are needed which maximise biodiversity potential…"

5. English woodland and nature conservation.
English Nature, 1996.

"…What are the main threats facing woodland nature conservation ?... Unsympathetic forestry management can result in the replacement of native species (such as oak and ash) with 'exotics' (such as spruce, sycamore and rhododendron)…"

6. Position statement on environmentally sustainable forestry & woodland management.
English Nature, April 2002.

"…We… emphasise the importance of ancient semi-natural woods because they support particularly rich communities of animals, plants and fungi… Ancient semi-natural woods are irreplaceable, and must be protected and managed so as to maintain and enhance their special character… New woodland of native trees and shrubs, should be created next to ancient woods to increase their size…"

7. Local Nature Reserves - places for people and wildlife.
English Nature, 2004.

"…A Local Nature Reserve must be managed so that the features which gave the site its special interest are maintained…"