

## The Sycamore on my Street

On February 14th 2023, Valentine's Day, I found out that my beloved Sycamore on the pavement opposite my window was due to be chopped down by the council the very next morning.

My heart broke.

The tree was healthy, but it had been left to grow tall and unruly.

I spent that evening on frantic calls with councillors and tree officers. My partner came over with a bouquet of flowers in one hand and a paintbrush in the other: he made signs while I launched a petition.

The next morning, as the chainsaw man stood threateningly by the tree, telling me "this was a lost cause", the petition had close to 500 local signatures.

A tree officer came to meet me and asked, "my understanding is that you won't move from under this tree and won't let us cut it?" My mind was focused and I was ready. "Yes, I won't move".

To the utter bewilderment of the chainsaw man, the officer shook my hand and announced they would be trimming the tree, not cutting it.

At this point the cut was simply delayed. The reasoning was that it was cheaper to cut down than to trim, in the long run.

This Sycamore tree is over 100 years old, a beautiful ancestor rooted on our street. It is home to a pair of goldfinch every year, and countless other species. It has seen many residents come and go on our road over the years.

Stoically standing there, it also captures carbon (more efficiently than young trees that likely won't survive the summer heat), cools our streets, provides much-needed shade, and reduces flood risks.

The tree wasn't safe so I didn't relent. To keep the pressure on I got a local journalist to write an article on the issue, I went to councillors' open surgeries, and kept emailing the decision-makers.

And then one day, the relief finally came. The council emailed to tell me that "I had won"; they would not cut the tree, they were letting it be.

And it grew back in the shape of a heart.