

## 6. 85 CROFTON STREET - BIRCH TREE REMOVAL

<b>General Manager responsible:</b>	General Manager City Environment DDI 941-8656
<b>Officer responsible:</b>	Transport and Greenspace Manager
<b>Author:</b>	Graham Clark, Arborist and Rod Whearty, Parks and Waterways Advocate

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to consider an application from the owner of 85 Crofton Road to remove the street tree outside their property in order to remove the existing house.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. In May 2006 Mr Fitzpatrick contacted the Council (RFS No CSR90421669) requesting the removal of the street tree (Silver Birch, *Betula pendula*.) on the berm outside 85 Crofton Road.
3. The reasons for the request is to allow the removal of the existing dwelling in its entirety prior to the construction of a new residential dwelling on the site. If the removal operation was undertaken entirely within the applicants property without encroaching onto the neighbouring property, then the existing Birch tree would need to be removed.
4. The tree which the applicant would like removed is a maturing silver birch (*Betula pendula*.) which shows signs of being in good health and vigour. It is a medium sized tree, approx 14m in height with a canopy spread of 10m. While there are a number of pockets of included bark at the larger branch unions approximately 3 metres up the main trunk, the trees form is good and it is very healthy. The arborist is not unduly concerned by the presence of these bark inclusions as they do not significantly affect the current structural integrity of the tree.
5. The tree is situated mid way across the grass berm in front of the property, hence it contributes to the amenity of the street landscape (photos of tree form and position in street will be tabled at the meeting). It is one of a group of approximately eight trees of this species type (*Betula pendula*) which have been planted in the immediate area to create an avenue affect for this section of the street.
6. The tree on the berm has been identified by the applicant prior to his application for demolition consents etc. The applicant has verbally indicated a willingness to pay for removal costs and also to pay for a replacement tree post completion of the development. He has had a quote to remove the tree in conjunction with other arboreal operations planned for the property and was quoted \$250 for the removal by the contractor engaged to undertake work within his own property.
8. However, the applicants removal replacement proposal is not "like for like", as it does not take into account the size and condition of the existing tree, the trees amenity value, or the time and resources the Council has invested in this tree.
9. Removal of this tree will have a significant effect on the aesthetic character in this part of the street. The tree is located within a group and removal will adversely impact on the existing "avenue" effect created this group.
10. The Transport and Greenspace Arborist has completed a compensation assessment on this tree (see **attachment**) which identifies the real cost of removing this tree when all other factors are taken into account. Staff would recommend that the applicant be charged the costs identified in the compensation assessment if the Board resolves to approve the applicants request. This would be consistent with other recent situations where applications to remove street trees for property development have been approved.
11. Tree removal is often seen as the "easy" option and there is a general lack of appreciation around the amount of time, cost and resources required to produce a mature healthy tree. This approach will also encourage people to become more environmentally conscious and increase their awareness around the true cost of removing mature healthy trees for development purposes.
12. Transport and Greenspace staff believe it is possible to remove the existing building with out affecting the birch tree if it is removed on an angle across the front of the neighbouring driveway and property. This would require the applicant to get consent from the adjoining neighbour to cross their land.

13. If the neighbouring property is not utilised to facilitate the house removal, there is no way the house can be removed from the property without the street tree being removed. It must be noted that the birch trees in this area are far from reaching their optimum age. Failing any catastrophic environmental or physiological events, it would not be unreasonable to expect these trees to remain healthy and sound until at least 2035.

#### **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

14. The tree is not listed as protected under the City Plan.
15. The Council has the right to retain this tree and is under no obligation to remove the tree to facilitate the removal of the dwelling at 85 Crofton Road.
16. If the Board approves the applicants request, then all cost associated with removal of the tree would be the responsibility of the applicant. All work would be carried out by a Council approved contractor.

#### **OPTIONS**

17. There are two possible options in relation to this application.
  1. Decline the residents application to remove the tree because an alternative route is available that would allow the house to be removed off the site while still retaining the tree, albeit this option requires the applicant to obtain the neighbours approval to cross their land.
  2. Approve the residents application to remove the Birch tree outside 85 Crofton Road subject to the applicant paying \$6500 identified in the compensation assessment which includes the cost of replacement planting. All costs to be paid prior to any work commencing to remove the tree. The Transport and Greenspace Unit would notify the immediate neighbours as a matter of courtesy prior to undertaking the work.

#### **PREFERRED OPTION**

18. The preferred option is option 1.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board approve Option 1 as outlined under the "Options" heading, thereby declining the residents application to remove the street tree outside 85 Crofton Road.