

## 8. STRATHEAN RESERVE – TREE REMOVAL REQUEST

<b>General Manager responsible:</b>	General Manager City Environment
<b>Officer responsible:</b>	Greenspace Manager
<b>Author:</b>	Tony Armstrong, DDI 941 8578

### PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to present an application seeking approval to remove the silver birch trees (*Betula pendula*) located in Strathean Reserve.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. On 30th September 1999 Council received a letter from Mr Neil Anderson, 28 Strathean Avenue, requesting the removal of the silver birch trees in the park due to their adverse effect on the resident's pool.
3. On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2005 Mr Anderson wrote again expressing concern that no action had been taken and that the trees were still problematic i.e. causing a nuisance with debris and also including a health concern due to the alleged toxic nature of the trees.
4. On 9th March 2005 in response to this, the trees were inspected by a council arborist and found to be "healthy with no apparent defects", and that, "on this basis there was no arboricultural reason to remove the trees".
5. On 13<sup>th</sup> July 2005 the Chairman of the (Fendalton/Waimairi) Community Board formally received a letter requesting removal of the trees and on 17th October 2005 the trees were viewed by the Community Board on a bus tour.
6. The trees were further inspected on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2006 following further discussion with the resident.
7. The trees in question are four medium sized, semi-mature birch less than 8m in height. Their health and condition do not appear to have changed since the previous inspection almost a year ago. They are situated to the north east of Mr Anderson's property, close to the boundary and alongside the footpath in the centre of the reserve. The reserve is a small (1265 m<sup>2</sup>) local park serving as an amenity walkway between Strathean Avenue and Stormont Place. Other trees in the reserve include Oak, Ash, Kowhai and a large Gum (*Eucalypt*).
8. On the basis of the above assessment there is no arboricultural reason to remove the tree and so the considerations for removal are therefore based on appropriateness of the tree to the site, nuisance, and the resident's concerns about health and well being.
9. The trees are a landscape feature being established and centrally situated in a small local park environment. However, their significance is minimised due to the presence of other large trees planted near entrances to the park. See photographs, **attached**. There appears to have been a history of removal and replanting of trees in the park with no particular or strong theme. The birch trees do not appear to be of any great significance, albeit providing some amenity value such as shade and screening.
10. The reasons given by Mrs Andersen for the removal of the tree are essentially ones of nuisances given their proximity and aspect to the resident's property. However, the trees do not overhang the boundary and it is not unreasonable to expect that trees drop debris as part of their life cycle, and, that regular maintenance of tree and property mitigates any nuisance.
11. Therefore, in my opinion, it is the concern regarding the health and well being of the resident, which is the major consideration in this case. The evidence for this is not proven, yet it is known that some people do have susceptibility to environmental factors that are a health concern. In this case however, due to the relative insignificance of the trees themselves, pursuing this will be of minimal value in determining the outcome.

## **FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

12. The cost of any monitoring, maintenance and removal/replacement of the trees is covered under the existing citywide arboricultural operations budget.
13. These trees are not protected under the City Plan.

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board approve the removal of the four silver birch trees located in Strathean Reserve and replace with appropriate planting in consultation with the adjacent residents.

## **CHAIRMAN'S RECOMMENDATION**

That the staff recommendation be adopted.

## **OPTIONS**

14. There are three possible options:

- (a) Do nothing or status quo.

This is not considered a viable option. Given the history of the residents concerns it would be unreasonable for Council not to consider any action in this case. It would be expected that if this option were chosen the resident would pursue further medical and legal advice, which may or may not be in Council's interests as a neighbour.

- (b) Transplant the trees.

This option is not considered viable due to the size, costs and risks associated.

- (c) Remove and replace the trees.

This option will address the nuisance and health issues. Selection of more suitable replacement trees for the site will help mitigate for the loss of amenity in the longer term.

## **PREFERRED OPTION**

15. The preferred option is option (c).