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Corporate Plan Output: Consultation and Advice p.9.4 text 6, text 46 Street Landscapes p.9.4.12	

This report presents the findings both for and against the removal of trees in this street (*copies of photographs are attached, see page 47*).

HISTORY

In August 1998 a letter was received from a resident, Mrs Paula Halliday, on behalf of the residents of Liggins Street.

“I am writing on behalf of the residents of Liggins Street. Our street is lined by magnificent Ash trees. While these trees look wonderful they have caused several problems, not only for the residents but also for the City Council. These problems include:

- *Roots breaking up the footpaths which were laid only three years ago.*
- *Branches interfering with the high wires, with the added danger of the trees destroying these wires in a storm.*
- *Leaves falling and blocking the drains, leading to regular severe flooding, especially at the Queensbury Street and Jean Batten Place intersections.*
- *The excessive height of the trees shading the houses on the south side causing moss and mould growth and extra heating costs to residents.*

Although the northern side trees are trimmed yearly to clear a space for the overhead wires, the southern side trees are only trimmed of their lower branches to avoid obstruction to foot and road traffic. These trees are now much taller and thicker than those opposite.

A great majority of the residents of Liggins Street are unhappy about the state of these trees. After a recent survey it was found that, although we love the beauty of the trees, and the shade they give in summer, we realise that they are an unsuitable size for the street in which they are planted.

We, the residents, would like to see something done about this situation. As a preference, replacing the trees with something more suitable would be the best solution in the long term. The trees in Goodman, Kingsford and Queensbury Streets are a much better size. This would not only please the residents but be of benefit to the Council as well with regard to pavement repair, drainage and flooding problems and would avoid the necessity of trimming a path for the overhead wires.

If this is not possible, we would ask you to consider having the trees severely trimmed and topped. This option would not remove the Council’s problems but would go a long way to pleasing the residents.

Please feel free to contact me at your convenience (phone number) to discuss this further. I look forward to receiving your reply in the near future as the residents are waiting to hear back from me."

This letter was responded to, advising that the Council's policy is not to top trees and that the options were either retention or removal (and replacement if required). Mrs Halliday was requested to supply the results of the survey mentioned in her letter.

The survey unfortunately, from the Council's point of view, included the option of topping the trees and only gained responses from 18 residents (understandably the majority of residents with trees outside their houses). This survey indicated that 17 residents wanted the trees topped, of these, 11 wanted replacement trees planted if they were removed.

Mrs Halliday was again advised that topping was not an option and that the views of a further seven residents with trees outside their houses should also be obtained, as well as the views of other residents in the vicinity. This next survey was undertaken by the Parks Unit over the succeeding months with the residents' views separated into four categories.

SURVEY

There are 45 houses in the street or adjoining streets with frontages onto Liggins Street.

A further five residents were surveyed in Kingsford Street, as they look down the street or have a view of a substantial number of the trees.

There are two absentee landlords whose opinions were obtained.

The current situation is:

(number of households: 50)

People with trees outside:	retain the trees	13
	remove the trees	11
People without trees:	retain the trees	17
	remove the trees	8

Staff members were unable to obtain one Kingsford Street resident's view because of an extended period in hospital, however the responses from all of the other 49 households were obtained.

If we include the view of one absentee landlord, the percentage responses are as follows:

People with trees outside:	retain	28%
	remove	22%
People without trees:	retain	34%
	remove	16%

Overall, to retain the trees: 62%
to remove the trees: 38%

The other landlord chose not to present a view either for or against, as they did not live in the street, but was happy to go along with what was eventually decided.

RESIDENTS' COMMENTS

During the survey, a number of comments were received by the Parks Unit, many agreeing with Mrs Halliday's comments as outlined in her letter, others disagreeing on matters such as:

The trees

- provide welcome shade and shelter.
- add value to their property.
- attract birdlife.
- give a ready indication to the seasons.
- influenced them in their choice of this street in which to purchase a house.
- increase the value of their home.

A number of responses were given on the understanding that the residents involved were not identified in any way.

MAINTENANCE WORK

Large trees in streets such as this are checked regularly, with high level checks and maintenance pruning conducted approximately every five years. Some branches on the north side of the street have been removed to clear the power lines and apart from the regular pruning, extra pruning has been undertaken in response to individual requests, at least three times in the last two years. There are no outstanding requests for pruning.

In an effort to come to some compromise, it was considered that perhaps a section of trees in the street could be removed, but a check of responses precluded this as there is no clear mandate for or against removal in any section of the street.

Apart from shading those houses on the south side of the street in winter, the main objection, even from residents who did not want the trees removed, was the problems caused by fallen leaves, ie litter and flooding. In response to this, the City Streets Unit increased its frequency of leaf collections and it has been requested that even more take place next autumn.

On inspection, some cracking of the footpaths has occurred but no areas are in an unsafe condition. The City Streets Unit maintain similar footpaths under trees throughout the City and as a matter of course, cut out roots that interfere with footpaths as they become unsafe. Seldom does this action require a tree to be removed.

As a response to a request from Mrs Halliday, Connectics (Southpower) checked the trees with regards to the wires and found no problems. Wires pass through tree canopies throughout the city.

Trees of similar ultimate size are not planted these days in street berms, as cultivars with smaller growth habits have become available.

Footnote:

The Parks Unit's overall service objective as outlined in the Corporate Plan is "To enhance the health, enjoyment and quality of life of the City's residents and visitors by providing parks and open spaces so as to conserve our natural resources, add beauty to the City's unique landscape and service the need for places for sport and recreation. To ensure that Christchurch remains the country's foremost premier garden city and that our public parks and gardens remain internationally recognised." In doing this, the Parks Unit are often presented with situations that question Council strategies where there is an effort to 'conserve our natural resources' and enhance the 'quality of life of our residents', because sometimes these generate opposing views.

In this case, the views of the Parks Unit and the majority of residents coincide.

If the Council were to resolve that the trees be removed, this operation would have to be identified in the Parks Capital Works budget. Once programmed, the Parks Unit would advise when this would be undertaken.

This report has been sent to all the households involved, as well as to others in the area who responded as a result of articles in The Press and the local residents' association newsletter.

Recommendation: That the Board recommend to the City Services Committee that the trees in Liggins Street not be removed and that the Parks Unit continues to respond to residents' requests to undertake acceptable pruning.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the aforementioned recommendation be adopted.