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Corporate Plan Output: Street Tree Maintenance and Felling Citywide	

The purpose of this report is to provide information and seek comment on the removal of twelve poplar trees on Sturrocks Road and the replacement of these trees with Kowhais.

The matter will then be referred to the City Services Committee for a decision.

INTRODUCTION

The poplar trees were planted in 1983 on the berm and are approximately 500mm from the legal property boundaries.

Poplars are a particularly large and fast growing species with a tendency to develop extensive lateral roots systems at or just below ground level. Due to their rapid growth rates they are very effective for creating an established look to new reserves, however they are no longer considered a suitable species for planting in street berms.

PROPERTY DAMAGE

The Parks Unit has received a complaint from Canterbury Leather International regarding the damage these trees are currently causing to their adjoining property. Adjacent property owners have also contacted the Parks Unit in recent years expressing concern about these particular trees.

The problems relate to the roots of the poplars breaking up the adjoining carpark, lifting of a concrete path and blocking of drains. A quotation of \$5,200.00 has been received for the repairs required.

It is noted that Canterbury Leather have already re-laid a portion of their carpark which was broken up by the tree roots - at their cost. This work was carried out approximately five years ago and this area is now beginning to break up once more.

To alleviate the problems the tree roots are causing would require root pruning of major roots, which in turn would de-stabilise the trees to such an extent as to require their removal.

RESIDENTS' VIEWS

Public consultation has been carried out in the form of a letterbox drop to adjacent property owners and those residents directly opposite the trees. The letter put forward the proposal of removing the poplar trees and replacing with New Zealand Kowhais next autumn. Fifteen returns were received, of which fourteen supported the proposal and one opposed.

CONCLUSION

Root pruning to prevent further damage to adjoining properties is not a viable option in this case. To leave the trees in their present position will require ongoing repairs on a regular basis, the cost of which would be met by the Council as the tree owner. Given that the trees are still relatively young, the current problems will increase significantly as time goes on and the trees continue to mature. These trees are not considered suitable for the site, hence the recommendation to replace them with New Zealand Kowhais.

Under the Common Law of Nuisance the occupier of a property affected by roots which encroach over their land is entitled to abate the nuisance by cutting them back to the boundary. This would have a significant effect on the structural stability of the tree if the property owner chose to exercise their legal right.

In view of the above considerations, it is recommended that the trees be removed and replaced with Kowhais, which have a non-invasive root system.

Recommendation: That the Shirley/Papanui Community Board recommend to the City Services Committee that the 12 Poplar trees west of the railway line in Sturrocks Road be removed and replaced with New Zealand Kowhai trees.

Chairperson's Recommendation: That the officer's recommendation be adopted and the trees be replaced by a suitable alternative which could include edible fruit trees.