

## 22. LAGAN STREET HEALTHY STREET TREE REMOVAL

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Corporate Plan Output: Street Landscapes	

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to remove the existing street trees in Lagan Street and resolve on the extent of the replanting programme.

### CONTEXT OF REPORT

For several years there has been ongoing debate regarding the future of the existing street trees along the berm on Lagan Street. Following a number of requests from residents, a questionnaire was sent out to survey the residence in February 2002. This has guided the Parks and Waterways Unit in the direction that we see best to proceed to a possible resolution to this issue.

The trees in Lagan Street were planted in 1980. These are 14 *Betula pendula* (Silverbirch) and 35 *Fraxinus oxycarpa* 'Raywood' (Claret Ash). Out of the 35 Claret Ash planted only 11 remain and only one of the 14 Silverbirch. Six of the original trees planted were lost in the October 2000 storm with the rest being removed for various reasons previous to this. The trees have been planted in a variety of positions from close to boundaries and driveway crossings (This is no longer done) to the middle of wider berms.

### RELEVANT CURRENT CONDITION OF TREES

The condition of the Ash trees are mainly in poor form with weak branch unions that have been prone to failing with the result of limbs being lost. Although these trees have been in for 20 years now, they have struggled and not yet reached their expected mature size. The trees close to property boundaries and driveway crossings are causing damage to fences, paths, gardens and paving. The legal position requires the trees branches and roots to be pruned back to the boundary if causing a nuisance to a neighbour, which in this case would destroy the overall aesthetic value of the trees. In addition this would create health and safety concerns if the roots were to be pruned back as this would considerably reduce anchorage and stability of the trees.

### RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

The resulting information gathered from the February questionnaire is laid out in the plan to be tabled. This indicates the positions of the existing 11 large Ash trees 1 Silverbirch and 8 small mixed Silverbirch and Kowhai trees. Out of the 57 residents in the street who received the February questionnaire a total of 27 responded. Only six residents requested the trees be retained. Three of these agreed they be retained on the condition that the trees be topped or heavily pruned. The council's tree maintenance policy does not allow "topping" or excessive pruning due to the long term detrimental effects to the trees health, safety and reduced life span. Out of the residents that responded 11 indicated they would like a replacement tree.

### A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The best option to address the resident's concerns would be to remove all existing trees excluding the large Liquidambar outside number 53. This is a fine specimen causing no adverse effects. The Claret Ash outside numbers 55 and 57 should also be retained as they are planted in a large lawn area on the Johns Road entrance to Lagan Street.

Three possible options open for consideration to complete replacement tree planting are laid out as follows:

- (a) Plant a tree outside the eleven properties that have indicated they wish to have a tree.
- (b) Plant trees in all the available positions down the street to maintain an avenue effect and continuity with the planting.
- (c) Don't replant any trees (due to the minority of properties indicating interest in having tree planted outside their property).

## CONCLUSION

As a result of the February questionnaire and the pending Community Board meeting the residents have been sent a letter advising them of the proposed work the Parks and Waterways Unit is seeking approval from the Community Board to undertake.

The letter suggested removing all existing street trees in Lagan Street and suggested *Acer palmatum* (Japanese Maple) as the suitable replacement species. The Parks and Waterways Unit believes this is an appropriate choice considering the restricted site conditions and concerns residents have with regard to the mature height and leaf size of trees in their street.

The letter also suggested that a replacement tree would be planted in every location where it was possible to accommodate a tree for reasons of enhancing the general appearance of the street as well as providing continuity along the entire length of the street. However it is important to note that a number of residents are uncomfortable with this particular aspect of the proposal as many have indicated that they do not want to have a tree planted outside their property.

There appears to be good support for the proposal to remove all the existing trees. The only area where there is appears to be some division, is the scale of the replacement planting. Therefore the extent of any replacement planting is an important decision the Board will need to resolve.

As an interim measure it may be best to proceed with option "A" at this stage and only plant trees in locations where property owners have indicated they would like a replacement tree. When other property owners see the contribution these small attractive trees make to the street they may change their mind and it is possible that continuity may still be achieved albeit over a longer period of time.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the existing street trees in Lagan Street be removed with the exception of the Liquid Amber Tree outside number 53 and the trees in the landscape area at the Johns Road end of Lagan Street.
  2. That option "A" be confirmed as the preferred option for replacement planting.

**Chairperson's Recommendation:** That the officer's recommendation