

7. DEE STREET – APPLICATION TO REMOVE ASH TREE

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Corporate Plan Output: Consultation and advice P9.4.8 Street Landscapes P9.4.14	

The purpose of this report is to outline the concerns of the residents and property owners of 46 Dee Street with regards to a Common Ash tree (*Fraxinus excelsior*) planted in the berm which partially blocks their driveway (photographs attached).

CONTEXT

The following letter was received by the City Streets Unit and was written on 30 May 2001:

“Dear Sir

RE MY PROPERTY AT 46 DEE STREET

Please consider removing the tree that is partially blocking the entranceway to the abovementioned property.

I am not living in this property, but every tenant who lives there complains about the difficulty manoeuvring the car in and out of the driveway and garage.

I would appreciate if this could be arranged.

Robert G Bell”

Mr Bell wrote again to the Council on 18 October 2001 and various Council officers have dealt with this application at some time or another.

On 19 February 2002 a tree officer from the Parks and Waterways Unit wrote back apologising for the late response, and replied, in part:

“I appreciate the problem your tenants experience manoeuvring their cars in and out of the driveway and therefore inspected the tree on Monday 12 February 2002.

The specimen in question is a healthy and structurally sound tree and part of a very impressive avenue-type planting. The loss of this particular tree would create a hole in the overall treescape”

The officer went on to suggest changes the owner could make in the driveway but these changes were not suitable to Mr Bell.

As this is a healthy tree, delegated authority for removal of such is with the Community Board.

There is no Council policy as such regarding the situation. The policy regarding planting new trees in streets states that “ the planting must be appropriate in size, density and position....” It is vital to ensure traffic visibility and personal safety”. The Council and Community Boards have, in the past, endeavoured to retain as many trees as possible in the streets, especially semi-mature ones such as these.

CITY PLAN

This property is on the corner of Dee Street and Severn Street which have similar sized trees as the other streets in the area such as Thames, Malvern and Mersey Streets.

The property itself is within the Special Amenity Area, SAM 15. This area is noted for its street scene under the City Plan which outlines that a SAM area has amenity and/or heritage characteristics which set it apart from the surrounding residential environment. These characteristics can be one or more of Attractive street trees, a river setting, architectural features or site layout of a specific period in the city's history.

The Plan's rules restrict private residents from developments which would affect these characteristics but say nothing regarding the Council's responsibilities as such. It is recommended that the Community Board assess this application with this in mind.

THE PROPOSAL

Dee Street runs for four blocks between Roosevelt Avenue and Thames Street. The ash trees were planted in 1935 with approximately 47 originally planted. The trees are evenly spaced with six or seven trees on either side of the street in most blocks. The only places where trees are "missing" from the avenue effect of these trees is where the double driveways of flats extend out into the street. It is impossible to say whether these gaps have been formed from trees being removed or whether the trees were not planted because the driveways were already formed. It is unusual that a tree be planted so close to a driveway, so it is presumed that it was either misplanted or the flats were constructed and the driveway put in after the trees. Current practice is not to plant trees so close to paths and driveways.

The trees in Dee Street and surrounding streets form impressive avenues and to remove this one would create a noticeable gap, especially as it is also beside a roadway, there is no tree to its east that would disguise the gap somewhat. In this situation, a replacement tree would not adequately take the place of the tree in question and in fact would detract from the avenue effect, being the only one out of place. This effect would continue over the years until the existing trees have ended their life and are removed, this single tree would then be large and out of place in a street of small trees. Thus if the Community Board resolves that the tree be removed, it is recommended that no replacement be planted in its place.

As the attached photographs show, the tree in question intrudes into the driveway's seal by 500mm and if you extend a line from the eastern side of the garage, the trunk takes up a metre of the resident's extended driveway which is 3 metres wide. The normal width of a car including rear view mirrors both sides, is 1.8 metres. A standard carpark is 2.4 metres wide. The distance between the tree and the low wall separating the two driveways of the flats is approximately 3 metres.

The issue for the tenant is that if they drove straight out the driveway, there is a possibility that the tree would be hit. There are some old, healed wounds on the tree about 1 metre above ground level, consistent with it being hit by a vehicle. The total vehicle entranceway giving access to the two flats, is approximately 5.5m wide. To successfully enter or exit this driveway, given that there is 3 metres between the tree and the low wall, it is necessary to angle into and out of it. This is all right if approached from Cranford Street as it is a natural turn, but coming from Thames Street, it is necessary to swing wide and turn sharply.

The Parks and Waterways Unit acknowledges that this could be a nuisance to drivers but submits that the nuisance factor is insufficient to cause the tree to be removed.

CONSULTATION

The applicant lives outside Christchurch but his mother, Mrs Beverley Bell has indicated that she will be present at the Board meeting and would like the opportunity to address the Board and answer any questions.

There has been no consultation with the surrounding neighbourhood as yet, but this can be undertaken if the Community Board so wished.

Recommendation: That the Ash tree in Dee Street be retained.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: That the officer's recommendation be adopted and that removal of the small dividing wall be discussed with the two property owners, to allow access to the garage.