

Redbricks Tree Maintenance Works **Community Consultation February 2014**

Background

The following responses were gathered by residents of the Bentley Estate (aka Redbricks), after a number of concerned residents complained to City South Manchester (CSM) and Redbricks Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) about the lack of consultation on recent tree maintenance works on the estate.

In some cases, residents were not informed that work was due to take place in advance, and only became aware of the works when contractors arrived on the 16th of January to begin tree felling and crowning work on Leaf Street. In particular, many residents were concerned about the proposed felling of 30 trees across the estate. After meetings were held between residents, TARA and CSM about this issue during the week beginning Monday 10th of February, work was temporarily halted and the plans made available by CSM for residents to view and comment on.

Three 2-hour consultation sessions were arranged for residents to come to the TARA office on 26a Humberstone Avenue and give their feedback on the plans. These took place on Saturday 15th of February from 2pm-4pm, Monday 17th of February from 12pm-2pm and Tuesday 18th of February from 6pm-8pm. Responses were also received from those unable to attend by e-mail and phone. Whilst we acknowledge that this consultation has not been carried out in ideal circumstances, we are happy to have received some very productive feedback from residents on this issue. We urge CSM to commit to a full and proper community-wide consultation process in future.

The information gathered over the three consultation sessions, and open community meetings about trees has been collated below by Rockdove Avenue resident Gemma Angel.

Summary

At each of the three consultation sessions, and one open meeting held at 6pm on Thursday 13th of February at the TARA office, a large map was displayed showing trees on the estate, numbered and colour-coded according to CSM's maintenance plan (this can be found at www.redbricks.org). This map was 'zoned' in order to allow residents to comment on specific trees and issues within their vicinity anonymously. Residents were then asked to post their comments on the map using post-it notes. Most residents concentrated their comments on their specific zones, but some also made general comments about whole areas (for e.g. Letsby Avenue or Princess Parkway), or the estate as a whole. Gemma Angel was present at every session and took note of general points and comments made by residents. The map was photographed at the end of each session. These photographs will be made available online at www.redbricks.org, and the map itself will remain on display in the TARA office.

The zones were organised as follows:

Zone 1: Letsby Avenue, upper 1/3, including residents at 237-233 and 231-227 Hulme Street; 2-22 Hunmanby Avenue and 1-27 Humberstone Avenue.

Zone 2: Letsby Avenue, central 1/3, including residents at 24-52 Hunmanby Avenue and 29-49 Humberstone Avenue.

Zone 3: Letsby Avenue, lower 1/3, including residents at 54-74 Hunmanby Avenue, 51-67 Humberstone Avenue, 234-238 and 228-232 Clarendon Street.

Zone 4: Leaf Steet, upper 1/3, including residents at 225-221 Hulme Street, 1-23 Hunmanby Avenue, and 95-77 Rockdove Avenue.

Zone 5: Leaf Street, central 1/3, including residents at 55-19 Rockdove Avenue and 25-59 Hunmanby Avenue.

Zone 6: Leaf Street, lower 1/3, including residents at 1-29 Rockdove Avenue, 61-83 Hunmanby Avenue and 22-226 Clarendon Street.

Zone 7: This area covers the evens side of Rockdove Avenue, facing the Princess Parkway.

Zone 8: This area covers the evens side of Humberstone Avenue, facing Jackson Crescent.

Since work had already been carried out in Zones 7 & 8, trees in these areas have been the subject of more general comments by residents living in these areas, as well as people living in other areas of Redbricks.

A total of 56 people from across the estate responded, either by attending the open meeting on the 13th of February or one of the 3 consultation sessions, or by passing on their comments via e-mail and phone. We consider this to be a good turnout considering the extremely limited time we have had to organise and carry out the events, and that this number reflects the strong interest that residents have in their green spaces. We believe that far more would have responded if a longer consultation timeframe had been practicable.

General responses are compiled below as well as a list relating to specific trees, aggregated from notes made on the map and in discussions at meetings. Not all trees have generated specific comments. The list is colour coded according to CSM's own tree maintenance categories:

Red indicates a tree scheduled for felling;

Blue indicates a tree scheduled for a crown reduction of 20%;

Green indicates a tree scheduled for a crown lift; and

Text highlighted in yellow indicates trees with no scheduled work.

A list of proposed outcomes based on resident feedback are included at the end of the document.

General Responses

- Lack of light, particularly to ground floor flats, is a problem for many residents on the estate. While most recognise that the height of the buildings ultimately determines light levels to the flats, the height of the tree canopy and the density of tree coverage in some areas exacerbates this. Conversely, some residents do not mind the low light and point to the trees and foliage providing privacy and the presence of birds and wildlife viewed from their windows and balconies as a source of active enjoyment and pleasure.
- The exceptional tree cover on the estate is generally regarded as an asset, and many residents feel that this is not fully appreciated by CSM. Many residents would like to see the Redbricks green spaces actively supported and promoted as an example of exceptional inner city habitat and green community activity.

- Letsby Avenue has been recognised as a woodland area, with its own distinctive character and biodiversity, which is different from other green spaces on the estate, and should be both managed and protected. This area is perhaps the most sensitive green space on the estate, where balancing residents' needs for light and preservation of the existing habitat should be carefully weighed. For instance, the majority of Zone 1 residents are concerned about light levels and would like to see more crowning and possibly the felling of one large sycamore tree in their area, whereas Zone 2 residents are concerned about the impact of felling on uncommon populations of birds roosting in their area.
- One resident who is a professional landscape architect has commented that trees that are asymmetrical are not necessarily unhealthy or dangerous and should not be removed or described as such. The descriptor 'suppressed' is loaded and unhelpful in a tree survey.
- Some trees marked for felling on Letsby Avenue are justified as being 'too close to buildings' when they are furthest away. This is evidence of poor quality of decision-making.
- Many residents expressed confusion at the apparent lack of logic and consistency in the decisions made about which trees should be felled/crowned. In particular, problematic trees in gardens are not marked on the tree survey map supplied by CSM, despite the fact that a number of residents have specifically requested works be carried out on these trees in the past. Many residents would rather see some of these trees removed than some of the larger trees in the communal areas (see the table below for specific examples).
- As a result of the previous two points above, some residents want to know what were the instructions given to the contractors, what their vision is for the site, and what their qualifications are.
- Many residents expressed frustration with small self-seeding saplings in gardens, close to windows, growing under buildings and inside the railing areas on Leaf St. and Letsby Avenue. Many wanted these smaller trees to be removed, rather than the mature trees.
- Looking at surrounding areas of Manchester over the last 10 years it is visible that there is a substantial reduction in the tree cover over this time.
- Residents on the Princess Parkway facing side of Rockdove Avenue have expressed dissatisfaction with the decision to fell trees along the motorway. This area has previously been designated as a 'Green Screen', which has been compromised by recent tree felling. Residents in Zone 7 are concerned about privacy, motorway noise and pollution reduction that trees provide here. In particular, it has been commented that the larger trees screened the upper floor windows from fumes and dust blown in from the Mancunian Way. Residents strongly feel that re-planting with medium-sized trees to replace those felled is required in Zone 7.
- Similarly, residents along Hulme Street rely on the trees in these areas to provide a barrier between the flats and the traffic noise and pollution from the Mancunian Way.
- Many residents object to any mature, healthy trees being felled across the estate.
- Some residents have expressed that the visibility of the larger mature trees over the rooftops is a positive.
- Many residents feel that trees are an important factor that enhances their quality of life.
- The trees provide habitats for a wide variety of birds including uncommon goldfinches, greenfinches, dunnocks longtailed tits and song thrushes, as well as robins, blackbirds, magpies, collared doves, coal tits, blue tits and great tits. There is also a thriving population of frogs on Letsby Avenue and squirrels across the estate, which rely on mature trees for their habitat.
- More new planting of a variety of trees across the estate is desired.

- Many residents feel that preservation of inner city green spaces is important for broader environmental and health reasons.
- Many residents feel that this area should set an example for urban green spaces in general, and they are proud to live in such an environment.
- Many residents agreed that trees should only be felled where absolutely necessary. There are no objections to diseased or dangerous trees being removed.
- Many residents expressed the view that trees are important for overall noise and air pollution reduction, particularly as we live so close to two major roads.
- All residents consulted agree that ongoing consultation on trees and green spaces on the estate is needed in the long-term.
- Many residents are concerned that there is currently no plan for re-planting in place.

Comments on Specific Trees

Zone 1

704 - Felling proposed. Residents at the end block of Hunmanby have expressed opposition to the felling of this Cherry tree, and would prefer that it be crowned.

710 & 711 - Felling Proposed. The felling of both these trees is welcomed by ground floor residents whose windows look onto them, due to low light levels in this area. However, this view is not shared by all residents in this area, some of whom would rather see only one removed, and like the privacy they provide.

753 & 752 - Crown lift. Residents immediately adjacent would prefer that these trees have the crowns reduced, rather than lifted. They point out that **752** has formed a bush which is encroaching on the fences and they would prefer that its height be reduced, or that it be removed altogether.

714, 713, 749, 750 & 751 - No works currently scheduled. Residents on the Hunmanby side of this area strongly agree that these trees should have some work carried out to reduce the canopy and let in more light, and are very disappointed that no work is planned on these trees. Crown reductions are the preferred option, although some residents have also suggested that one of the trees on the Hunmanby side be felled to thin out the tree coverage. It has been suggested that **749** be felled instead of **748** (see below).

Zone 2

Cherry Tree, No.23 Humberstone - This tree is not marked on the map, but residents in the end block have expressed concerns that this tree is diseased and may need to be removed.

741 & 742 - (In garden) No works currently scheduled. These trees are problematic for residents at 36-52 Hunmanby, and there is a general consensus in this area that these trees be removed. These trees are closer to the building than adjacent trees, their removal would reduce 'overcrowding' in the canopy (see **739**).

748 & 746 - Felling proposed. Ground floor resident immediately adjacent to these trees has commented that they are happy with the light levels in their garden and would prefer these trees to be crowned. Some residents have also commented that the trees in this upper corner of Zone 2 currently provide a lovely space for children to play in.

- 720 & 721** - Felling proposed. Opposition to the felling of these two small trees has been expressed by residents. Some would prefer only one of these trees to be removed, preferably 720.
- 739** - Felling proposed. The felling of this tree is strongly opposed both by those living immediately adjacent, and residents living on other parts of the estate. This tree is home to a large colony of goldfinches, which are uncommon in city centres, and it is strongly felt that this habitat must be preserved and protected. The reasons given for felling are 'overcrowding/proximity'. It has been suggested that trees **741 & 742** in the adjacent garden be removed instead to comply with the need to thin out the trees in this area.
- 745** - No works currently scheduled. Some residents affected by the shade of this tree have requested that it be added to maintenance plans for future crowning.
- 740** - No works currently scheduled. Some residents feel that this tree will cause light problems in future as although it is not yet very big, it is a very dense, fast growing cyprus tree. Others like the presence of an evergreen for winter colour and prefer it to be pruned, as it is the only cyprus tree on the estate.
- 738** - No works currently scheduled. Residents at 48-50 have requested that this tree be crowned/large branches thinned out, as it blocks out light from their flats.

Zone 3

- 726** - Felling proposed. This area supports a large population of small birds and appears healthy. Residents in this area opposed to its felling.
- 735** - Felling proposed. No objections due to visible deadwood being present, and proximity to the building. Potential hazard.
- 733** - No works currently scheduled. This is a very large tree which is too close to the building. Residents looking onto this tree from Clarendon Street have requested that this tree be felled also, as this area is very dark during the summer months.
- 730** - Residents object to the felling of this tree, particularly those living in 228-232 Clarendon, as the foliage provides privacy for residents overlooked by the block opposite (234-238 Clarendon). It also produces berries which are a food source for local birds.
- 732** - Nearby resident requests that this tree be added to a future tree management plan for crowning.
- 734 & 736** - No works currently scheduled. Residents on the Hunmanby side generally agree that they like the mature trees in this area, but have expressed the need for medium-term maintenance work being carried out on the larger trees (e.g. crown reductions).

Zone 4

- 782** - No works currently scheduled. This tree is leaning over at an extreme angle, and some residents have expressed concern that it is unstable and/or potentially dangerous.
- 788** - No works currently scheduled. Residents at 1-11 Hunmanby are concerned by root damage to the path leading out of the back of the block, which has become very uneven and is causing difficulty for prams. They do not want the tree to be felled, but would like the path to be repaired as a matter of urgency.
- 787** - Felling proposed. Residents in this area are opposed to the felling of this healthy flowering Cherry tree, which brightens the entry into Leaf St. from the city.

Zone 5

- 790** - No works currently scheduled. Residents at 37-47 have requested that this tree be pruned.
- 775** - Crown Reduction 20%. This is a very large tree, resident at 37-47 Hunmanby has requested that this tree be reduced further to a 50% crown reduction.
- 769 & 768** - Crown reduction 20%. These trees have been crowned, however residents on the ground floor have requested that these two trees be removed from their garden due to overcrowding. There are currently 4 small trees in this garden.
- 792** - Felling proposed. The felling of this tree is opposed by residents on both the Hunmanby and Rockdove side of Leaf St., and strongly opposed by some. At least 7 residents directly affected have expressed opposition to the removal of this tree, on the grounds that it is an important habitat for squirrels, uncommon long-tail tits and other birds, as well as enhancing the environment, providing enjoyment and privacy for residents. However, it was also generally agreed that the height of the canopy should be reduced. Therefore crown reduction work would be preferred over felling.
- 842** - No works currently scheduled (In garden). Residents at 67-77 Rockdove have requested that this tree be crowned.
- 843 & 844** - No works currently scheduled (In garden). Residents at 55-65 Rockdove affected by these two trees have requested that they be crowned/pruned as a matter of urgency.

Zone 6

- 796** - Felling proposed. Residents on Hunmanby directly adjacent to this tree have objected to the felling of this tree, as have neighbours on the opposite side of Leaf Street, whose gardens and balconies are affected by the shade cast by this tree in the afternoon. Both sides agree that crown reduction is preferable to felling, in line with **797**.
- Leylandii Tree, No.7 Rockdove** - This tree is not marked on the map, but is a very large fir tree in the bottom corner of the garden at No.7, which the resident and neighbours above and as far along as No.19 actively want removed. This tree casts dense shadow over the buildings and neighbouring gardens. A separate letter from the resident at No.7 has been sent to Tom Rock petitioning for its removal.
- 798 & 799** - No works currently scheduled. Residents at the end of Rockdove Avenue and 222-226 Clarendon Street requested that some pruning/reduction work be carried out on these trees as part of future tree maintenance works. &98 blocks light to Clarendon flats. Some residents have suggested replacing this tree with a smaller tree situated further from the building.

Outcomes

- It is hoped that tree maintenance work will recommence this week, beginning in Zone 1 and progressing through Letsby Avenue, and onto Leaf Street.
- Crowning work should be prioritised until final decisions can be made regarding the trees currently scheduled for felling. It is hoped that felling be minimised, particularly in the case of trees which have been contested by residents (see table above).
- The lack of a meaningful and thorough consultation process with the local community on the part of CSM has been criticised in the strongest terms by both residents and TARA. CSM must commit to an adequate and inclusive consultation on Redbricks green spaces in future, and TARA must be recognised as a significant community voice by CSM in this process.

- It is important that a long-term tree management plan is put in place, and that any future plans should be presented to the community for discussion before drastic tree works involving felling etc. are carried out. This planning should be transparent, actively involve residents and present a clear rationale for any proposed works.
- Residents want a tree management plan that is gradual and productive, that does not result in a drastic reduction of mature trees in the medium term, and that involves more planting of a variety of trees across the estate.
- We need a long-term management and design strategy that encompasses visual, financial and environmental consequences of tree cover on this estate as a whole.
- Maintenance of large trees in gardens should be addressed by CSM where requested by residents. Trees in gardens have been left out of the current planned works, despite some long-running disputes over particular trees in gardens on Letsby Avenue and Leaf Street. These trees should be made a priority, as they are close to the buildings and many residents are unable to deal with them themselves.
- Regular groundwork should be carried out to remove small saplings growing at the edges of the buildings, inside the railing areas on Letsby Avenue and Leaf Street, and in gardens where possible. These trees are a persistent problem as they are self-seeding and fast growing. In many cases, it is these smaller trees growing too close to ground floor windows that are responsible for obscuring light.

**Compiled by Gemma Angel on behalf of TARA and Redbricks residents,
19th February 2014.**