

Appendix 3.

Townhill Park
Southampton
SO18 2RD

Ms. Hannah Chalmers
Senior Tree Officer
Southampton City Council

2nd December 2013

Dear Hannah

River Walk – Hornbeam Tree Problems

Thank you for your emailed letter of 21st November, in which I appreciate your open and honest response to our previous communications. It is now quite clear that the responsibility to move forward with these issues rests with the residents and obviously within the constraints mentioned within your email, we as TPRA will continue to support the residents and press for satisfactory agreements between all parties.

I now write following upon the conclusion of our residents survey. Please find appended within this letter a summary table of the resident's responses. Of the 27 homes surveyed we have had positive feedback of 22 homes, which is extremely encouraging and quite clearly reveals that there is genuine concern over the encroachment of the offending trees and a desire to see the situation resolved amicably.

In response to your reply to our posed question of what is reasonable concerning the resident's rights to reasonable enjoyment of their respective properties, and your statement that the council has no legal obligation to prune the trees to improve light. I would counter this argument with the fact that there was apparently no discussion with the residents on the choice or species of trees chosen to replace the diseased Elm trees, and consequently the residents now have to deal with the fact that the trees have out grown the environment in which they are planted.

The local authority must accept its responsibility for this poor selection process, for as you are fully aware common hornbeam when naturally grown are massive, excluding all other plants beneath them with expected heights of mature trees reaching 20 metres. What is being requested by the residents is **considered entirely reasonable** through seeking the council's assistance in dealing with this problem as ownership and maintenance of the trees remains the council's responsibility. As previously mentioned this seemingly only affects properties at the lower end of the road which suffer the worst light restrictions to their homes as the proximity of the trees to these houses in some cases are within 7 meters.

During our discussions with the residents it was also reported that there is definitely a safety problem at night due to the fact that the tree foliage is now obscuring the street lighting to such an extent that the lighting is rendered ineffective. Tree roots have severely affected the pavements creating tripping hazards which are not always apparent in the reduced lighting and the residents are fearful of the possibility of pedestrian accidental injury.

Other issues raised relate to tree branches below the required safety height of 2.5Metres are causing obstructions to driveway access with potential to damage commercial vans.

In addition several residents have registered major concerns which relate to an existing problem with root damage to the storm water drains. This issue has been previously reported to SCC as following upon their

insurer's investigation it became apparent the drains had collapsed on council owned land and that the responsibility to repair lay with the local authority. To date no action has been taken by SCC.

In an attempt to move all these matters forward to a positive conclusion. I fully appreciate the restrictions faced by the SCC in relationship to budgetary constraints, and in recognition that the majority of residents surveyed are in favour of tree retention we seek a constructive dialogue with SCC to agree future tree management options.

We would as previously suggested, and acknowledged by your response, now seek to arrange a site meeting with representatives of TPRA to discuss these issues with the view of reaching agreements to put to all residents at a subsequent open meeting. We are completely flexible with date/time of this meeting, which we could fit around your diary commitments and perhaps you could offer up some options for consideration.

Townhill Park Residents Association – River Walk Questionnaire/Survey Feedback Record

Questions Asked	Yes	No	N/A
Would you wish to see removal of any of the offending trees	24%	71%	5%
Does the existing foliage of the trees effect your quality of life and or enjoyment of your property	76%	24%	
Have you experienced significant reduction of light levels due to the tree growth over the past few years, or since you were last consulted by SCC	62%	34%	5%
Were you consulted over the introduction of the STORMS management policy of trees by Southampton City Council	10%	90%	
Would you appreciate a constructive dialogue with SCC where you would be able to question the Tree's Team over future management plans for the offending trees	81%	19%	
Do you consider the local council have listened to your concerns and acted fairly in dealing with your issues	10%	76%	14%
Do you want the offending trees to be significantly cut back to improve natural light to your properties	62%	33%	5%
Were you informed from the outset of the replacement for the diseased Elm Tree's as to the likely mature height and spread of the common hornbeam trees as selected by SCC	5%	66%	29%
Additional Optional Comments Received			
Health & Safety Issue at night, very dark due to obscured street lighting with possibility of personal injury			
Trees contain loads of Dead Branches- that fall risking possible injury, or damage to parked vehicles.			
Rainwater storm drains are reported as being seriously affected/damaged by tree root invasion.			
Concerns expressed over possible root damage to house foundations- reassurances being sought from SCC			

I sincerely hope that results of our survey as indicated above conclusively reveal the total strength of feeling held by the residents in relationship to these trees, which like it or not these trees are oppressive when compared to their environment and close proximity to the domestic homes. We look forward to receiving your response to our letter and to your agreement to meet with us shortly

May I take this opportunity to thank you for your positive response and look forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience for as previously mentioned to do nothing is not an option.