
TO:	Finn Campbell, Planner
FROM:	Luke McKinlay, Landscape Architect
DATE:	17-January-2025
SUBJECT	LUC-2024-460 – Proposed removal of a Scheduled Tree (T014) – 33 Preston Crescent.

Kia ora Finn,

The following is in response to your request for comment on the above application to remove the scheduled tree T014 (Tawhai/*Nothofagus menziesii*/Silver Beech) at 33 Preston Crescent.

As outlined in the application, the applicants wish to remove the tree for the following reasons:

- Potential damage to the foundations of the rental unit at the front of their property due to the tree's roots.
- The possible contribution of the tree's root flare to flooding issues in and around the rental unit.
- Safety impacts related to branches falling from the tree.
- Adverse shading effects.
- Limitations on the usability of the property under the canopy of the tree.

Site Context

The site is located west of the town belt, near the intersection of Preston Crescent and Granville Terrace in the suburb of Belleknowes. The surrounding area consists largely of residential properties, which are typically occupied by one or two storey stand-alone dwellings. There are several rear, leg-in sections on both sides of Preston Crescent, between Harcourt Street and Beaumont Road. A wide range of architectural styles are represented in the neighbourhood. Front boundary treatments are varied, including timber picket fences, low masonry retaining walls and hedges.

There are no nearby street trees on Preston Crescent and only two nearby street trees on Granville Terrace (*Hoheria* sp. and *Sorbus aucuparia*). In addition to T014, there is a scheduled Lancewood (T526) and two Copper Beech trees (T524 & 527) within a 200m radius on Granville Terrace. The reserve at the eastern end of Preston Crescent and the bush within the town belt also contributes to the "green", well-vegetated character of wider surrounding area.

Comments

I undertook a site visit to the area surrounding the subject tree in January 2025 to determine the likely effect of the removal of T014 on existing visual amenity values and to reassess the existing STEM evaluation. Photographs taken at this time are appended to this memo as Attachment 1.

STEM Assessment and Visual Amenity Comments

There are three main assessment categories to a STEM report – condition (health), amenity (community benefit) and notability (distinction). The condition section is typically assessed by an arborist and the amenity section is typically assessed by a landscape architect. The notability section generally requires written and substantiated evidence to support additional "merit points".

This memo is restricted to considering amenity related matters.

The 1998 council STEM assessment of T014 resulted in a total “score” of 168. The largest component of this was attributed to the age criteria, where the tree scored 27 (100 years+). Assessment of the condition section of the STEM resulted in a subtotal of 81, the amenity section scored 69, and there were additional notable evaluation points for this tree being a “feature” and more than 100 years old.

My re-evaluation of the 1998 STEM results in some changes to the scoring of the criteria, but confirms the existing sub-total for the amenity section (score of 69), as follows:

- Stature: 15-20m+ (15 points)
 - Visibility: 2km (3 points)
 - Proximity: 3+ (21 points)
 - Role: Moderate (15 points)
 - Climate: Moderate (15 points)
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- The stature of the tree has increased since the 1998 assessment. As identified by the applicant’s arborist, T014 is approximately 17m tall.
 - It is considered that the visibility of this tree is largely contained to the immediate surrounding neighbourhood (within 500m).
 - The Silver Beech is clearly the most visually dominant tree in the surrounding streetscape but is part of a small cluster of other nearby smaller trees (group 3+).
 - The scores for “role” and “climate” remain unchanged.

In general, it is considered that due to its stature and front boundary location, T014 forms a prominent natural feature from surrounding locations on Preston Crescent and Granville Terrace. This Silver Beech is the largest, most prominent tree in the immediate surrounding streetscape. It provides a natural counterpoint to surrounding residential built development. As a tree of considerable age, it has likely become a local landmark.

Prior pruning work appears to have occurred within the canopy of this tree to provide clearance around power lines. This detracts somewhat from the aesthetic value of the tree; due to the asymmetry it has created, but these adverse effects are relatively minor. Some support cables have been installed within the tree. There appears to be agreement between the arborists that these cables were incorrectly installed. Whether these are replaced or removed will not have a notable effect on the amenity value of the tree.

It appears from the comments of both arborists that the tree would benefit from maintenance to remove dead and dying branches. This would likely also improve the appearance of the tree. In general, and as confirmed by both arborist’s assessment, the tree is in fair health.

In conclusion, this large native tree continues to make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the street and wider surrounding area. Its removal would have an at least moderate adverse effect on existing amenity values.

Regards,

Luke McKinlay
Landscape Architect
CITY PLANNING

Appendix 1: Site Photographs



Figure 1. View towards T014 from the east on Preston Crescent.



Figure 2. View towards T014 from near the corner of Preston Crescent and Granville Terrace.



Figure 3. View towards T014 from Granville Terrace.



Figure 3. View towards T014 from the east on Preston Crescent.