

Mr & Mrs B D Gray (not D R Gray) of
24 Valley Road
Holywell
Whitley Bay
NE25 0LG

06 May 2022

Linda Jackson
Legal Officer
Regulation Team
County Hall Morpeth
Northumberland
NE61 2EF

**RESPONSE YOUR REF. FORMAL NOTICE OF MAKING (OF) TREE
PRESERVATION ORDER (TPO) No.03 2022**

with respect to trees as singularly identified located on the property of
Northumberland County Council, Holywell Village First School, Valley Road,
Holywell

It is with dismay and despondency, a feeling shared by my neighbours, that we received this notification in light of your department being no doubt unaware of the many years and countless occasions, that residents have spoken with representatives of the school and NCC regarding the encroaching trees where these overhang the rear properties on Valley road. There are common concerns held by residents however all we have continuously strived for is an understanding of the reasons for our request in maintaining the trees. Where some residents have brought in tree surgeons at personal expense or trimmed branches that can be reached, this has been a last resort as the school have remained resolute and declined to engage with its neighbours in the community. As the legal position is that any trimmed branches must be deposited in the property of the 'owner' within which the tree is situated, this is the rule residents have followed in returning these to the school grounds. We firmly believe it is the cost incurred by the school to remove/dispose of these branches that has been the catalyst and from which the TPO has been initiated and which the school deem to be an appropriate response and end to this matter.

Nonetheless while we are 'invited to respond' to this Notice, it is staggering that the 'position' taken is that said trees are being considered for protection on the basis of 'prominence within the surrounding landscape and contribution to the visual amenity of the site'. Residents would agree but this is not negated by the height and reach of the trees in proximity to the boundary. And, we feel strongly that the branches overhanging / extending across the properties should be maintained as a responsibility of the school. An assessment and regulated maintenance carried out by an expert tree surgeon not only preserves the health of the tree but equally the visual aspect. It goes without saying that NCC regularly maintain the numerous sycamore trees on Valley Road itself and within the village. Moreover, residents of Valley Road could be anyone in that they could be comprised of teachers or parents of children attending the school, my point being that as residents we all relate to having the same concerns and it is on this basis that residents had looked to the school in the hope that we could jointly find and be mutually agreeable to a solution.

As the school have not been open-to engaging with residents, we recently came together and discussed and formulated a petition. As a formal request we felt this was the only opportunity left to us and this will be forwarded to relevant persons forthwith. I enclose the 'wording' of the petition below merely for context and support as a resident in relation to what has been outlined above.

Finally, while this 'response' to the TPO Notice does not present an objection for your consideration per se (and this may be all that you wish to take from this response) this is because it is not my intention to disregard the beauty of the trees in question on the whole - in the event the TPO were to be made permanent, even though status quo would endure and we would have the same concerns. Whereas the alternative in not protecting the trees is not so as to allow free rein on the part of residents simply because the school is firm on not engaging with residents and maintaining the trees as I hope the contents herein can substantiate.

Yours faithfully

Mr & Mrs B D Gray
24 Valley Road

encl. Residents of Valley Road Petition

Petition for the regular maintenance of trees in Holywell First School grounds bordering family homes on Valley Road

This petition calls for the responsible management by Holywell First School of the trees in the school grounds which border the neighbouring family homes on Valley Road; and for meaningful engagement by the school with residents on the required management of the trees from either side of the fence.

There are a range of tree species of varying sizes, many of which are higher than the houses and overhang the back gardens by up to and over 50%; massively reducing people's ability to use their gardens for normal everyday activities.

The ongoing failure of the school to manage the trees, despite multiple requests to do so, is negatively impacting neighbouring families in terms of quality of life, hazards to physical and mental health, hygiene and safety, potential damage to property and drainage systems, and to property values.

Resident families have the reasonable expectation to be able to use their back gardens in the same way as most other people can, which is the basis on which this petition is being raised to call for prompt action.

We were collectively uncertain to whom this petition should be addressed, so have forwarded it to particular and relevant persons identified, in the expectation that it will be responded to appropriately. We would welcome the opportunity to engage in a meaningful way with the appropriate person/s.

Please send any written response to all houses numbered below.