

Ms A Young
10 Valley Road
Holywell Village
Whitley Bay
NE25 0LG
10th May 2022

FAO Linda Jackson

Re: Objection to TPO 2022 (No. 03 of 2022)

I have been made aware of a temporary TPO coming into force for a number of trees (red oak and sycamore) on land at Holywell Village First School which borders the rear of my back garden.

I object to the TPO generally, and more specifically re the sycamore behind number 12 Valley Road, for a number of reasons and I set out below:

- a) Some recent context, including my communication with the school directly
- b) A summary of my points of objection

Context:

I moved into my property during Summer 2021 and shortly thereafter contacted the school about the maintenance of the sycamore which was overhanging approximately 40% of my garden. The school manager informed me that she would call Asset Management, which I believe she duly did. In October I contacted her again as to the outcome of the assessment made by Asset Management and was told the answer was no to the trees being managed but that she had been awaiting the report before contacting me; I explained that I was prepared to follow whatever process was in place to escalate my request and was told I'd be given the process and report when it arrived. In January 2022 I contacted the school again for an update and had a conversation with the School Manager in which I was told that I would not be sent a copy of the report and that there was no escalation process, the answer was no and that was final. We discussed the fact that I was unable to dry laundry outside due to it becoming covered with bird droppings (and my hands when taking it in), that I spent time every weekend clearing droppings from floor/patio/garden furniture etc, that guests to my home had been splattered with bird droppings whilst crossing the garden (photo's submitted to Environmental Health), as had my pets, that I was unable to use my garden to relax or entertain. Whilst seeming sympathetic to the issues I outlined, there was no change to the final position. I explained that, as the school was unwilling to manage the trees and as there was no escalation route for me to follow, I would have no option to arrange to have them pruned to the fence-line from my side and the material put over the fence (which the school had previously insisted on when other residents had cut back trees) which I believed was in line with the legal requirement to which the school manager said yes. Not wanting to do the wrong thing I then took advice from a tree surgeon and a solicitor and subsequently wrote to the school in February informing them of the date the work would be carried out, to which I received no response.

Over the following weeks I became aware that several of my neighbours have similar difficulties and it is apparent that numerous approaches have been made to the school without success. There has been no meaningful engagement by the school with its neighbours, despite multiple approaches by residents, and this most recent action seems immensely heavy handed; borderline aggressive.

I was staggered to hear of the TPO, effectively removing people's right to cut back the branches to the fence line as and when required. I have no objection to living alongside the trees, but I do not want to live under them. I find it hard to believe, in the year 2022, that the expectation is for people to be made to live in such unsanitary conditions; potentially placing people's physical and mental

health at risk without provision of a reasonable rationale or any engagement to fully understand the effects of this action.

My clear frustration is that I have tried to engage locally, as have many other people, and been frustrated in those attempts and, as stated above, this action feels aggressive and unnecessary. I remain happy to engage on the subject and enter into an agreement short of a TPO.

Several residents had already met (several weeks prior to the TPO letter) and decided to petition for the management of the trees and presumably that will go ahead alongside the TPO process. The header of the petition is shown below:

Petition for the regular maintenance of trees in Holywell First School grounds bordering family homes.

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 or engage with residents, 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.

Grounds of objection:

The trees in question are very large both in terms of height and, more damaging to quality of life, spread. There is no request to have the trees removed but rather to retain the right to manage them from the resident side as required. These trees are not in a conservation area and have not been subject to a TPO before. Given the position of these trees, it is unclear to me what significant amenity they offer to the general public.

The TPO refers to the visual amenity of the trees, however they are not visible from the Valley Road or the footpath; they are visible to the primary school children and teachers in the school grounds but that side of the trees will remain unchanged by any pruning, and beyond the school field there is farmland. I cannot agree that cutting back the trees from the resident side will harm the visual amenity of the overall tree line to anyone.

The trees have gone unmanaged by the school for many years and there is no reason to assume they will be more responsibly managed in the future. Unmanaged growth is worrying on multiple fronts:

- I already have to use the electric light in the kitchen at certain times in daylight hours, as the trees grow and spread and become denser, presumably that requirement will increase.
- The constant anxiety during periods of high wind and storms (which seem to be on the increase in ferocity) that branches will fail and come onto the house.
- Given the proximity to the house I am also concerned about damage to foundations and drainage systems (Northumbrian Water seem to be attending the street with increasing regularity).

As stated above the sheer amount of bird droppings is over-whelming and unhygienic. This requires clearing every weekend lest it carry into my home on my feet, those of visitors or pets. I am unable to use my garden fully for normal everyday activities and have experienced both humans and pets being splattered with bird excrement, my hands being covered in it when taking in laundry. We all lead busy and stressful lives and should have the right to be able to relax in our gardens; I believe that to be a reasonable expectation where currently the quality of my life is being detrimentally effected.