

Springfield Trees – Ownership and Future Maintenance

The following statement was made at the March Local Area Committee meeting and has relevance to the current situation in Springfield generally where lack of maintenance is causing some anxiety to residents. This is particularly so in parts of Sheriffs Park where tree roots are acknowledged to be disturbing a protective bank resulting in flooding to the gardens of some properties and potentially inundating the underbuilding of some houses.

Statement by NETs, Land and Countryside Services

Having established that the council doesn't own all the tree belts within the Springfield area, the residents who had made enquiries to the council regarding the removal of trees in areas where it was determined that the trees belonged to "Residents in Common"; were informed that they had the right, with the agreement of neighbours, to have the trees safely pruned or felled at their own expense. The residents were also informed that the council would continue to maintain the trees and areas of open space on land owned by "Residents in Common" on an informal basis provided there were no fundamental changes to land use or significant felling without the council's permission.

Subsequently, a number of residents arranged for trees impacting on their own properties to be felled and removed, including a large area of felling. The trees were removed without the council's permission and without residents communicating with their wider neighbours. This has resulted in the council receiving further enquiries from other residents seeking clarification on the future maintenance responsibilities for the tree belts and areas of public open space.

The council is currently considering whether a Tree Protection Order is required to protect the interest of important trees in the future. A comprehensive survey of the tree belts is currently being undertaken by officers to determine the requirement for Tree Protection Orders. On conclusion of the survey a public meeting will be arranged with local residents to discuss the options for the future maintenance of the trees and areas of public open space on land owned by the "Residents in Common".

End of statement

This statement was made with particular reference to the wider Springfield estate and without reference to similar problems elsewhere in West Lothian and without reference to council policy on the adoption of roads, pavements, and open space generally. As a result of Covid 19 restrictions no public meeting has been held but the problem with trees and open space generally is growing. There has been no report on the comprehensive survey of the tree belts undertaken by officers.