

CASE STUDY: MOTTRAM AVENUE

In December 2015, five Lombardy Poplars were felled on Mottram Avenue in Chorlton. The trees were situated on land owned by Southway Housing Trust and had been identified by an independent consultancy as showing a large increase in tissue degradation or decay when inspected in September 2015. Upon receiving the assessment, Southway were conscious of the importance of these trees in the local landscape and decided to work with Red Rose Forest to engage residents in the process that led to their removal and replacement. In the past, trees had been removed from this area and there was a strong public protest with individuals chaining themselves to trees to protect them, leading to reputational damage to Southway.



Prior to felling works, October 2015

Red Rose Forest have extensive experience of working with urban communities on projects such as woodland management, street tree planting schemes and woodland creation.

Together with Southway, Red Rose Forest devised an engagement strategy to ensure that residents fully understood why the trees needed to be removed and what would be done to compensate for their loss. Prior to the removal of the poplars, a letter was sent to over 80 households directly bordering the area where the poplars were located. The letter explained that new oak trees would be planted which would have greater longevity and a better biodiversity value. Residents were also invited to read the arborist's report and provide feedback. This letter and the transparent approach was key in creating a more positive outlook on the poplar removal.

Local notice boards were also used to consult passers-by and the local residents association was contacted with detailed scans of the trees. Manchester City Council and the local MP and councillors also provided assistance during the consultation phase.



Before the poplars were felled, five oak trees were planted on Mottram Avenue which demonstrated Southway's commitment to fulfil the promise they made in the consultation letter. Southway and Red Rose Forest wanted to engage local schools and the community in the planting work but this was not possible due to timescales and the run up to Christmas.

The Mottram Avenue project demonstrates the value that Southway attach to their trees. The planting of the oak trees will ensure the legacy of the much loved poplars lives on. Consequently when the remaining poplars have to be removed, the residents will be confident that they will also be replaced.

During the process, Southway did not receive a single complaint or protest about the felling work, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the the communication and consultation process.

Mottram Avenue provides an excellent case study for Red Rose Forest's four-year Heritage Lottery Funded project, Heritage Trees. The project aims to capture people's thoughts, stories and memories about trees across Greater Manchester.



Newly planted oak tree, December 2015

One local resident asked to keep a section of one of the trees as memorabilia after blessing and thanking the poplars prior to their removal.



Removal of poplars, December 2015

