



Wanganui District Council Tree Policy 2008



Originator: Carolyn McIntyre, Policy Planner

Contact person: Parks and Property Manager

Approved by: Council

Date approved: 25 February 2008

Review date: February 2012

Contents	Page
1. Introduction	4
2. Philosophy	4
3. Scope of Policy	4
4. Background	5
5. Issues	6
6. Objective	7
7. The Value of Trees to Community Wellbeing	7
8. Tree Planting	8
8.1 Planting Priorities	8
8.2 Tree Management	9
8.3 Tree Replacement	9
8.4 Gateway Planting	10
8.5 Planting Key Transportation Routes	11
8.6 Character Areas	11
9. Requests for Street Trees	14
10. New Subdivisions	14
11. Privately Planted Trees on Council Land	15
12. Private Trees Encroaching on Council Property	15
13. Council Trees Encroaching on Private Property	16
14. Tree Removal	16
15. Tree Maintenance	18
15.1 Requests for Additional Maintenance	18
15.2 Trees near Power lines	19
15.3 Privately Planted Trees near Power lines	19
15.4 Unauthorised Pruning, Damage, or Removal	19
15.5 Collection of Firewood	20
16. Tree Adornment	20
17. Commemorative Trees	20
18. Protected Trees	21
19. Notable Trees	22
20. Other Legislation	22
21. Other Policy Considerations	22
22. Definitions	23
Appendices	24

1.0 Introduction

The Wanganui District Council Tree Policy has been developed to provide policy guidance and a consistent approach to the planting and removal of trees on Council owned land.

The policy has an important role in raising the awareness of the community in relation to the benefits of trees, their multiple functions and the ways in which they contribute to improving the condition of our environment.

Due to limited financial resources the Council has developed priorities for tree planting. Over the next five years, the Council will give priority to replacing existing trees that need to be removed, city entrances (gateways), Central Business District and key transportation routes.

The Council recognises that it will not be assuming the total responsibility for landscape enhancements throughout the District. The Council understands the importance of harnessing the support of key environmental organisations, beautification societies and other interested agencies and individuals by entering into partnerships for the long-term development and maintenance of amenity areas in the District.

2.0 Philosophy

The philosophy of the Wanganui District Council is that trees are significant and valuable assets which need to be maintained. The Council will actively seek opportunities to plant trees, and where the Council does remove trees it will plant replacements when and where it is appropriate to do so to ensure continuity.

3.0 Scope of Policy

This tree policy covers trees within the Wanganui District that the Wanganui District Council has the responsibility to manage. The Council is responsible for the management of all trees (and other vegetation) on road reserves (excluding State Highways), recreation reserves and other public reserve areas. Trees on private property are not covered in detail in this policy; however, the Council may include trees on private property when the policy is reviewed.

The policy has been developed principally for the management, planting and removal of trees within the urban area.

This policy also does not cover detailed information on how the Council will physically plant and prune trees, and what trees will be planted. The Council intends to develop an Operational Manual which provides this information.

This policy replaces all previous tree policy documents such as the Street Tree Policy 2002 (Greenstreets Policy). It is intended that the policy cover a period of five (5) years, with a review to be undertaken in 2012.

4.0 Background

The origins of Wanganui's urban street tree plantings were in the 1880s during the term of Mayor James Laird. James Laird persuaded the then Borough Council to embark on a policy of planting street berms with London Plane trees. In the 21st Century this legacy provides a significant backbone of Plane trees linking the central city of Wanganui to St John's Hill, the riverbanks and a number of suburbs, including Wanganui East and Gonville.

In 1897 the Council planted Oak trees along a section of Heads Road to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee. In 1902 an avenue of Oaks were planted in Halswell Street. These plantings are predominantly still intact and are now over 100 years old.

Between 1910 and 1940 some 160,000 trees were planted throughout Wanganui's reserves and streets. Much of Virginia Lake, Kowhai Park, Matipo Park and the Whanganui River bank were planted between 1912 and 1921 under the guidance of the Beautifying Society. Although records are not complete, selected streets in Gonville, St Johns Hill, Aramoho and Wanganui East were planted between 1928 and 1936.

Many of the trees mentioned above are still alive and are now highly valued by the Council and the community. A small number of these trees are also protected within the Wanganui District Plan to ensure they are retained for as long as is practicable.

This history of street tree planting has been continued by successive Council's through the decades. Today, Wanganui has more than 10, 000 street trees growing in its urban area. For a number of years the Council has been largely undertaking replacement planting due to the number of mature trees and the amount of development, particularly in the central city.

In addition to street plantings, new park landscapes have been developed over the last two decades - the most significant being the vast collection of trees at the Bason Botanic Gardens.

Previous Policy – Street Tree Policy 2002 (Greenstreets Policy)

In 2002 the Council adopted the Street Tree Policy (Greenstreets Policy). The main objective of this policy was to retain the mature streetscape of trees. In terms of maintaining the mature streetscape the Council Parks Officers were required to view the street as a whole, or entity, rather than tree by tree. Although individual trees could be removed, the overall emphasis was on retention of the streetscape in a way that was sustainable. Therefore, instead of wholesale removal and replacement, the policy aimed to ensure gradual replacement.

The concept of interplanting (introduced in the 1997 Tree Policy) was continued in the 2002 policy. This concept meant planting between large trees, several years prior to the removal of the neighbouring tree, therefore reducing the impact and loss of aesthetic value. However, interplanting has not always been viewed as successful as in some streets it has created a mish-mash of trees as different species are introduced into a street. Also, planting a younger tree in between two larger trees can mean the new tree does not get enough light or water to ensure survival.

The intent of the Greenstreets Policy (to gradually replace mature trees) was a good one; however, Council Parks Staff have commented that the policy document was too descriptive and did not have clear objectives.

5.0 Issues

There are a number of issues which this policy aims to address:

- Ageing treescape – many streets within the District have a number of mature trees which on the surface give a good impression but have underlying problems (such as causing damage to infrastructure and poor health)
- The CBD has changed a great deal in recent years with infill development and increased volumes of traffic. The scale and intensity of planting may no longer be as appropriate. It may not always be practical to replace all trees that are removed due to limited space.
- Network utilities (electricity, gas, post, water, wastewater and telecommunications) and the road controlling authority (Council or Transit New Zealand) have specific rights of access to and use of the road corridor which are defined in legislation. A network utility operator has the power to set reasonable conditions on other network operators to protect safe and efficient functioning of their asset. This may mean request to prune or remove trees. For example, recent electricity regulations require trees to have greater clearance from powerlines. These regulations mean that pruning of large trees to provide clearance can affect the health and form of the trees resulting in loss of aesthetic value. There are also likely to be high maintenance costs to prune these trees on a regular basis. Failure to meet conditions of the network utility can mean the Council will be open to litigation by network operators.
- A culture has evolved which means that complaints surrounding trees frequently reach Councillor or Committee level. A clear policy framework is needed to enable Parks Officers to make practical decisions regarding tree matters. This will ensure that Councillors know the correct process for tree issues and there is consistency in decision making.
- Trees within the urban environment are often threatened by new development (for example, infill subdivision may result in requests for removal of Council trees). Building design can be an issue if leaf fall occurs and gutters block more readily. The tree was there first? How can the Council ensure new development occurs without major reduction in Wanganui's tree stock?
- What criteria should the Council use to determine if a tree can be removed? How does the Council assess the amenity and dollar value of tree(s)? Should there be a requirement to pay compensation to Council when a tree is removed from a public place? Which method should be used to assess the dollar value of the tree(s)? Should there be a private good versus public good assessment?
- The Council has been criticized for the removal of some street trees without notifying the public (for example, the removal of London Plane Trees in the Central Business District and the replacement of London Planes with Autumn

Glory). When should the public be consulted? What right do citizens have to request that no new trees are planted when some are removed?

- Insufficient space is provided for street trees in road berms of many new subdivisions. How do we ensure that tree continue to be planted after the subdivision has been approved?
- Parks Officers are frequently asked to deal with the nuisance factor of trees (such as leaf fall, shading and pollen).

6.0 Objective

The objective of this tree policy is to provide policy direction on the management of Council-owned trees in the District. This policy aims to provide a policy which:

- Recognises the amenity, historical and environmental value of trees, and how this promotes community wellbeing;
- Maintains the integrity of Wanganui's treescape while allowing flexibility for tree removal and replacement in order to maintain and create treescapes for future generations;
- Proposes character areas for each suburb;
- Provides citizens a clear understanding of their rights in respect of requests for tree removal and planting;
- Provides greater officer decision making and ensures consistency in decision making;
- Gives consideration to threatened habitats.

7.0 The Values of Trees to Community Wellbeing

Policy 1: Values of Trees to Community Wellbeing – Council trees are valued and are recognised as an important resource which shall receive the same consideration as other Council assets.

Explanation

Trees on public property are valued by the Wanganui District Council; therefore, the Council is committed to planting and maintaining trees throughout the District. The Council has chosen to protect some trees on public and private property within the Wanganui District Plan. These trees are also highly valued by the Council and the Council aims to continue to offer these trees a high level of protection, and encourage and promote them where possible.

Trees make a significant contribution to the District in a number of ways. They have a positive impact on the environment through providing shade and shelter, seasonal colour, and aesthetic value. In addition, trees can aid climate control, provide ecological diversity, stabilise land, attract and support bird life and mitigate noise and air pollution.

The amount of tree cover throughout our District has increasing relevance in the face of global warming, and higher incidences of skin cancer. The Solar Protection Policy (adopted by the Council in 2005) also acknowledges the benefits of trees in providing protection from the sun.

Trees also have an important role to play from an urban design perspective. They are used to frame views, provide a focal point, enhance and soften hard landscapes, and reflect local identity. Trees can also affect driver behaviour, “calming”, or slowing traffic down.

Trees can be important links to the commemoration of significant people or events of the past and serve as a cultural element spanning generations of a community.

A tree on its own adds value to the environment; however, when grouped with other trees (for example, an avenue of trees) the value may greatly increase.

New development and urban intensification can threaten the number of public and private trees within the District’s urban environment. Retention of existing young and mature trees and planting of new trees in public places therefore presents a significant contribution to retaining the District’s green character and amenity. Trees on private property are also considered a significant resource and the Council intends to promote private plantings.

8.0 Tree Planting

This section provides policy direction on tree planting on Council owned or managed land. The following matters are covered: planting priorities, tree replacement, gateway planting, planting key transportation routes, character areas, tree planting requests, new subdivisions, privately planted trees on Council land.

8.1 Planting Priorities

Policy 2: Planting Priorities – Planting priorities are as follows:

1. Tree Replacement - Replacing existing trees that need to be removed.
2. ‘Gateways’ – The entrances to the city.
3. Key transportation routes.
4. Central City (Central Business District).
5. Parks and Recreation Reserve areas.
6. Streets where residents request trees be planted.
7. Poorly planted neighbourhoods and industrial areas before well treed ones.
8. Unplanted streets or streets where planting needs upgrading.
9. Tree planting along waterways, walkways and green corridors providing linkages through the District.

Explanation

Given that there is not an unlimited budget for tree planting, priorities are needed to guide decision making around where planting should take place. Generally the priorities will be in descending order – those priorities at the top of the list will be given higher priority. The priorities at the top are of the list are considered to be more critical in terms of the overall tree framework. Specific information to be considered for each tree planting situation is to be provided in the Council’s Operational Manual (such as soil type, drainage, local climate and width of berm).

Where tree planting is to take place, property owners will be informed of tree planting in their street. Although Parks Officers have found people increasingly do not want trees, the Council will plant or replant in all streets where practicable. The Council will aim to replace like with like unless there are extenuating circumstances.

8.2 Tree Management

Policy 3: Arboricultural Contract - Council trees will be managed according to specifications in the Council's Arboricultural Contract.

Explanation

The Council's Arboricultural Contract sets out how the Council will manage its trees (including tree planting, maintenance and removal).

Policy 4: Road Corridor Management – The Council will consider pedestrian and traffic safety and network utilities when managing trees in the road corridor.

The primary purpose of a road is to provide a transportation corridor for pedestrians and/or vehicles. The secondary purpose is to provide a corridor for network operators (electricity, gas, post, water, wastewater and telecommunications). Therefore, within the road corridor there is a need to consider:

- Pedestrian safety
 - trip or fall hazards from roots
 - low branch hazards
 - trip or fall hazard due to wet slippery leaves on footpath
- Traffic safety
 - sight line hazards
 - carriageway clearances for heavy vehicles
 - flooding hazards due to leaf fall and consequent blockage of draining system
- Damage to network services
 - trees or roots vs. utility infrastructure
- Conditions set by other network operators under the Code of Practice for Working in the Road.

The issue of clearance from powerlines is also covered under Section 13 - Tree Maintenance.

8.3 Tree Replacement

Policy 5: Tree Replacement – It is acknowledged that all trees have a finite life and a replacement programme will be developed for all Council trees, which aims for phased replacement to ensure the overall tree framework for the District is maintained.

Explanation

The Council currently maintains a number of ageing trees throughout the District. All trees have a finite lifespan. If the Council values trees and wants to maintain its supply of trees around the District, there needs to be a plan for their replacement. The

Parks Department will develop a replacement programme for all trees (beginning with street trees). The timing of replacement for each tree will be dependent on a number of factors, such as species type, life expectancy, and health of the tree, potential of the species to cause undesirable nuisance factors, time of year, and the particular location. The timing of the replacement will be determined by Parks staff.

The Council will phase or stagger replacement of trees in any one street (or park or reserve space) to allow for gradual removal of these ageing trees, therefore, not resulting in the loss of all mature trees in a street or reserve/park. The phased replacement of the ageing trees throughout the District should also reduce maintenance costs associated with these trees.

There may occasionally be circumstances which necessitate the removal and replacement of a large number of trees for a variety of reasons. Criteria for removal of trees are discussed under the Tree Removal section of this document.

The development of a replacement programme will require a database of Council trees to be maintained including such information as tree species, tree characteristics, location (map co-ordinates), date planted, date inspected, caged or staked, soil type, protected or not protected, voltage of overhead power lines, type of maintenance required. The replacement programme is intended to form part of the Council's Operational Manual and be available for public inspection.

Council trees are planted in public areas which are used for a variety of purposes. For example, the road corridor also provides potential road widening opportunities, pedestrian access, and a location for essential services including both overhead and underground services. These other functions need to be considered in the planning and planting of trees on public land.

8.4 Gateway Planting

Policy 6: Gateway Planting – Emphasize and enhance Wanganui's gateways through the use of tree planting.

Explanation

Wanganui's gateways are the key entry and exit points which people experience as they travel into and from the urban part of the District.

Tree planting at the gateways has the potential to enhance the arrival (and departure) experience. The response at each gateway will be determined to an extent by the transport corridor configuration and space available for planting.

Guidelines on planting the gateways will be provided in the Operational Manual.

Tree planting gateways will require consultation with agencies relevant to the particular project under consideration, such as Horizons Regional Council, Transit New Zealand, and local iwi.

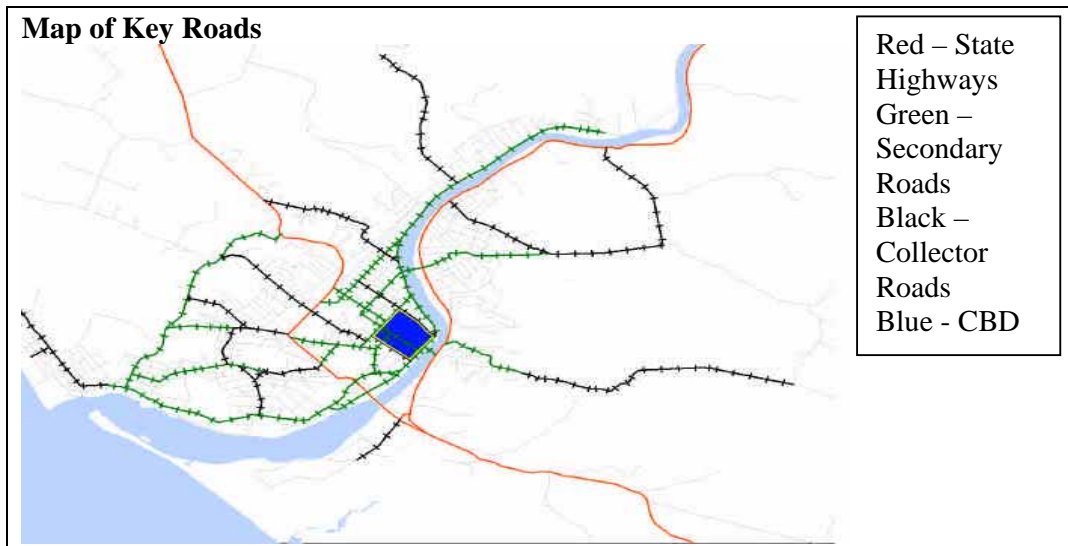
The impact of gateway planting can be further enhanced by continuing to plant the selected species along the key route from the gateway.

8.5 Planting Key Transportation Routes

Policy 7: Key Transportation Routes – Emphasise and enhance Wanganui’s key transportation routes through the use of tree planting.

Explanation

The main transportation routes through Wanganui are considered to be the State Highways and other arterials (main roads) and could extend to rail. These key routes provide an important opportunity to influence people’s perceptions of the District. These main roads and rail routes are shown below.



With respect to roadside and railway planting, trees add amenity value and can play an important role in framing and directing important views, providing shade, filtering wind and adding oxygen to the air. On these routes trees also have a role in lessening traffic noise and filtering fumes.

Tree planting proposals for key transport routes will require careful analysis of each transport corridor and development of site-specific concepts. Principles for planting proposals on key routes and a list of characteristics considered appropriate for planting on key transportation routes will be provided in the Operational Manual.

8.6 Character Areas

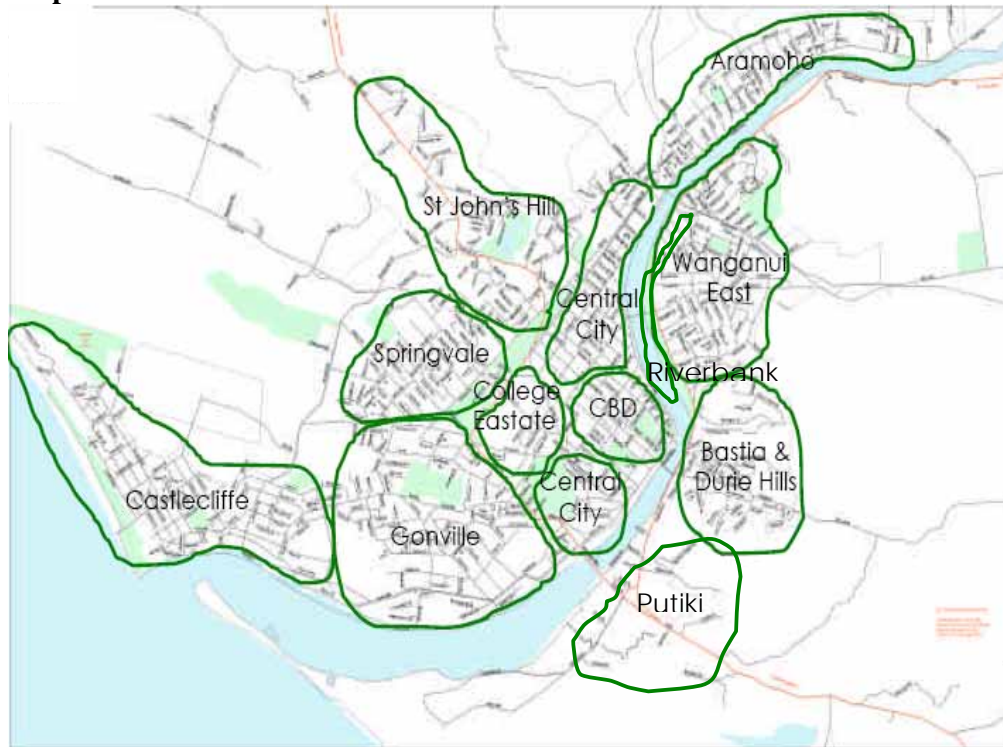
Policy 8: Character Areas – Develop character areas for each of Wanganui’s suburbs with a register of species that could be planted to reflect the character of each area.

Explanation

The development of a new tree policy offers an opportunity for tree planting to recognise and reinforce the diversity of character throughout the District. This section identifies 13 character areas, based on Wanganui’s suburbs and settlements.

It is important to note that the character areas do not have fixed hard edges. In many cases there will be an overlap between the different character areas.

Map of Urban Character Areas



The characteristics of each character area and a register of potential species for each of the character areas will be provided in an Operational Manual.

When planting existing and new streets in each character area the Parks Officers will use the tree register in the Operational Manual as a guideline for choosing tree species for that area. In some situations a different species may be planted in streets which currently have a single species established.

Signature Species

The register includes one or two signature species for each character area, which can be used to represent the “uniqueness” of the character area. These species have been selected because of the relevance the tree has to the character area or because the features of the tree mean that it is an attractive species for planting in key locations. These species can be planted in key locations such as main streets, around a key civic building or community focal points, where conditions are suitable. These species can also be used by schools and businesses, and Council in a symbolic way through designs used for banners, street furniture, signage, paving, written material and the like.

Streets

In selecting tree species, consideration has been given to the ability of the species to grow and thrive in the street environment and to the impact they may have on infrastructure and underground services.

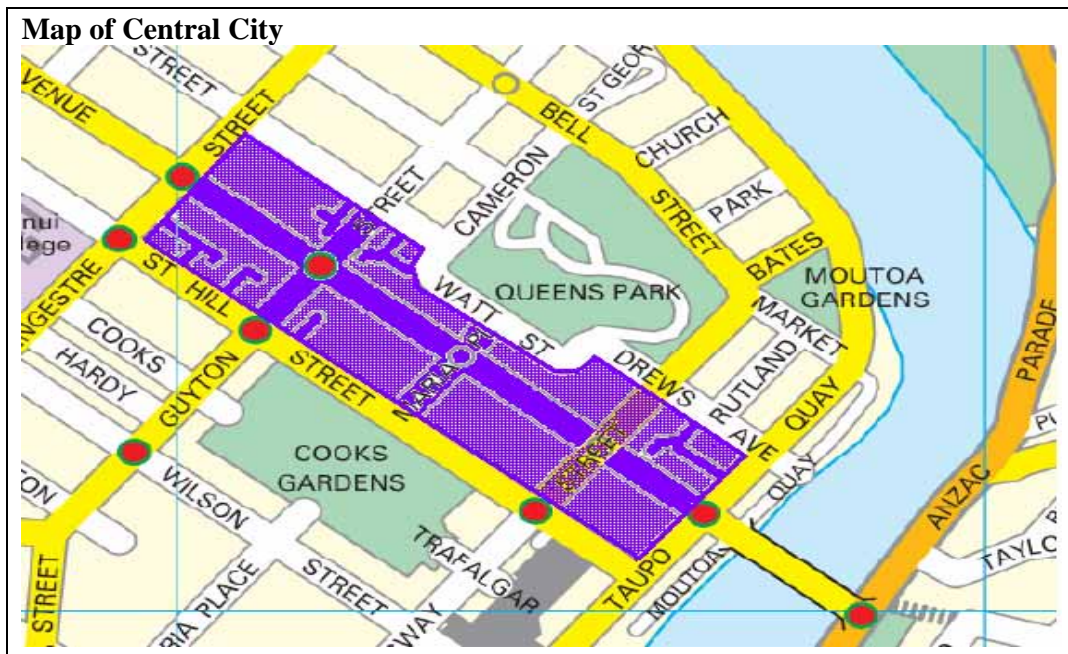
Central City

Policy 9: Central City Planting – Ensure London Plane Trees planted in the Central City have a maximum life span (generally 10-12 years) to ensure infrastructure is not damaged. Trees shall be replaced overnight in the Central City to avoid gaps in the streetscape and disruption to businesses and the public.

Explanation

The Central City, although one of the Character Areas, contains a unique set of issues and requires specific policies.

As with major transport routes and city entrances, priority shall also be given to planting the central city, as this is the shopping hub of the District. For the purposes of this policy, the boundary of the central city is the area looked after by Mainstreet Wanganui. A map of this area is shown below in purple.



Given the built up nature of this environment the scale of the planting may no longer be appropriate. Many of the existing London Plane trees are lifting paving and asphalt on the road, and the canopy size produces significant leaf fall. It is recommended that the London Planes be replaced more frequently (roughly every 10-12 years) to reduce the damage to infrastructure. Each tree will need to be assessed individually as there are likely to be differences in growing rates. An annual assessment of the trees will be undertaken.

London Plane Trees

Policy 10: London Plane Trees – Continue the London Plane Tree theme in the Central City.

Explanation

London Plane Trees have been used extensively in the inner city of Wanganui, contributing significantly to the streetscape and softening the impact of the built environment. These trees currently line both sides of Wanganui's main street and

several side streets. The Council acknowledges that the London Plane Trees are a special feature of our District which creates an “avenue feel” and a link to early European settlement.

Given that the London Plane Trees are an iconic feature of Wanganui’s central city, the Council will retain the London Plane as the dominant species for the central city. However, the Council also recognises that retaining all London Planes in the central city is not possible. This is for a number of reasons, including size, disease and damage to infrastructure. London Planes will also require more regular replacement in the central city given the compact form and the quick growing nature of these trees.

The London Plane theme could be conveyed in a number of ways. For example, on the side streets of the Avenue the London Planes could be used on corners as anchor species, with other species in between to create variety.

The Council will investigate alternative species to the London Plane which have similar characteristics. The Council will also look into methods to reduce tree root damage to footpaths, roads and utilities in the central city when trees are replaced or new trees added. Planting and management methods will also be investigated by the Council to extend the life of certain trees.

It is recognised that there are other species of trees in the Central City and that these add value to the amenity of the area.

9.0 Requests for Street Trees

Policy 11: Requests for Street Trees - Council will receive and consider requests from individuals or groups for street trees to be planted.

Explanation

Parks Officers will consider requests for tree planting and in considering the application will be guided by the Council’s Operational Manual.

10.0 New Subdivisions

Policy 12: Street Trees – The provision of street trees shall be addressed in subdivision applications. Developers will be required to comply with landscape design and practice standards in NZS4404: Land Engineering and Subdivision and the Wanganui District Council Supplement to NZS4404 Land Development and Subdivision Engineering.

Explanation

Street trees and other landscaping are often not thought about when a subdivision is being planned. As a consequence, there may be limited planting space available.

In relation to street design and tree planting, the New Zealand Standard and companion document have relevant standards which need to be adhered to as a minimum requirement, and read in conjunction with this policy document. The standards require a minimum of one tree per two properties to be planted in the road reserve. Trees are to be planted outside alternative properties to create a zig zag tree pattern along a road.

The standards also include minimum separation distances and site distances for tree and shrub planting from intersections, light standards, driveways, bus stops, pedestrian crossings, sumps, and sign posts; tree plant size and location, species selection; quality control; irrigation; minimum construction and maintenance requirements for landscape works.

Where a new road is required for a subdivision the developer shall discuss their subdivision proposal with the Council's Parks Officers early on in the planning stages so they are aware of and can take into account the tree planting requirements.

In considering what species is appropriate the Council's Operational Manual should be referred to. Also, it will be important to consider surrounding streets so that some linkage can be created.

11.0 Privately Planted Trees on Council Land

Policy 13: Illegal Planting – The Council does not approve the planting trees or dumping of greenwaste and other vegetation on Council land except when agreed to by Council Officers.

Explanation

The Council does not generally allow for the public to plant or dump greenwaste on Council property. However, applications can be made to the Parks Officers for consideration on a case by case basis. Where inappropriate planting is identified the person(s) responsible will be contacted and may be requested to remove the planting(s). Alternatively, if necessary, the Council will remove the planting and recover costs.

12.0 Private Trees Encroaching on Council Property

Policy 14: Trees Encroaching Council Land – Trees or vegetation overhanging or encroaching on any Council property where it is likely to impede, obstruct or endanger pedestrians or traffic shall be trimmed to reduce the hazard.

The maintenance of vegetation adjacent to Council-owned land is the responsibility of the property owner. Where this vegetation overhangs the property boundary it may be a hazard to members of the public on foot or in a vehicle. Where the vegetation is assessed and considered a hazard a Council Officer will make contact with the property owner concerned and give them a time frame to remedy the problem. Where a property owner fails without reasonable excuse to trim the offending vegetation, the Council will have the work undertaken by a contractor, with payment for the work billed to the property owner.

In 2004 the Roading Department developed a guideline for the encroachment of vegetation on footpaths to assist with enforcing the Streets 1996 bylaw relating to overhanging trees. This document contains useful diagrams and should be referred to by Council Officers when dealing with vegetation overhanging or encroaching on any footpath.

13.0 Council Trees Encroaching on Private Property

Policy 15: The Council will accept its responsibilities under property law to address trees encroaching on private property.

Where a Council tree is encroaching on private land, the property owner is entitled to have the tree cut back to the property boundary, unless the tree is a Protected Tree under the Wanganui District Plan. The property owner is required to contact Council's Parks Officers to arrange the pruning. With respect to Protected Trees, the property owner needs to discuss the proposed pruning with Council's Parks Officers, and the officer will advise on the process.

Where a Council tree has caused damage to private property, the Council will accept its responsibilities under property law.

14.0 Tree Removal

Policy 15: Tree Removal - Applications for tree removal will be considered by the Parks Officers and assessed against the following criteria:

Trees on publicly owned land can be removed if the trees are:

- Dead, dying, seriously diseased or badly and irreparably misshapen;
- Hazardous to public safety and property¹;
- Causing uncontrollable structural damage to any street or utility service and remedial work to prevent further damage is impractical or greater than the value of the tree²;
- Impeding the functionality of a water course or drainage channel;
- Part of a replacement programme³;

Or where:

- Continued pruning is detrimental to the ongoing health of the tree, or
- The ongoing health of the tree itself or those trees in the direct vicinity is/are affected. For public requests to remove trees, the decision as to whether the above criteria are met rests with the Council Parks Staff.

Trees will generally not be removed solely for the following reasons:

- To protect views;
- To reduce shading;
- Dislike of species;
- Tree size;
- To address nuisance factors, such as leaf fall, pollen, and dropping of other debris.

¹ In order to determine the hazardous nature of a tree the Council Parks Staff are guided by the following document: 'A Photographic Guide to the Evaluation of Hazard Trees in Urban Areas: Second Edition' N. Matheny & J. Clark, International Society of Arboriculture, Savoy, Illinois, USA, 1994. Where a death has occurred due to the location of a tree, the appropriate Committee of Council shall be informed

² Where roots are lifting footpaths, the Council will consider ramping over roots rather than removing the tree.

³ This may mean replacement of all trees in one street at a time. There may also be times when the Council is replacing/repairing underground pipes, the curb and channel or footpath, and this may be an opportune time for the Council to replace the street trees at the same time. Discussion will be needed with Infrastructure Services staff as to whether the replacing of the street trees can be done in conjunction with their proposed work.

Where a number of trees are to be removed from a street or Council reserve the Parks Staff will inform the public through a notice in the Community Link page of the Chronicle.

Where a request is received to remove a tree or group of trees which do not meet any one of the criteria above, consideration will be given to all of the following:

- A qualified arborist's report which assesses the health and condition of the tree(s).
- The STEMS evaluation (see evaluation form in Appendix 1), or a nationally recognised alternative tree evaluation method.
- A public versus private good evaluation⁴;
- The length of time the individual has lived near the particular tree.
- The age of the tree.
- The proximity of the tree to the house.⁵
- The number of other trees in the street or immediate vicinity.

Following consideration of the above, one of the following courses of action will be decided upon by the Parks Officer:

- Continue to manage the tree in a way which enables the tree to grow true to form as per contract specifications.
- Remove the tree in whole and replace with another tree.
- Bring forward the programmed replanting of the affected area as a means of resolving the issue of tree removal.

Where a Parks Officer cannot make a decision, or a dispute arises that cannot be resolved by the Chief Executive then the matter will be referred to a specialist panel of Council for their consideration and recommendation to Council. The panel shall be made up of an arborist, a person with skills in urban design, two senior managers (Parks and Infrastructure), and the Chair of the Community and Environment Committee (or substitute from the Committee). The Chief Executive will inform the elected members when they are approached regarding a dispute.

The decision of the Parks Officer may be appealed to the Chief Executive.

Cost of Tree Removal

Policy 16: Cost of Tree Removal – Recognise the value of trees as assets by placing a monetary value on them.

Explanation

If after assessing the application under Policy 15 it is agreed that the tree may be removed then the applicant will be required to pay the following prior to the tree being removed:

the cost of:

- the removal of the tree by a Council approved contractor (including any cost to repair damaged infrastructure that is the result of the removal); and

⁴ Is there a benefit/loss to the wider community of the tree being removed?

⁵ Where infill development has occurred, the Parks Officer will give priority to the tree if it existed prior to the infill development.

- purchasing (wholesale value) and planting of a replacement tree of a minimum standard as specified in Council’s Operational Manual.

The Council may also require the payment of a fee based on the following:

- the value of the tree (as assessed using STEM).

If a replacement tree is not able to be located in the immediate vicinity (for example, the same street where the tree is removed) the replacement tree will be located elsewhere in the District.

15.0 Tree Maintenance

Policy 17: Tree Maintenance – The Council seeks to provide trees that are healthy, aesthetically pleasing and safe. All Council trees shall receive one maintenance visit once every two years.

Explanation

Trees and other plantings can often struggle to grow well in some public areas for a number of reasons. An ongoing approach to maintenance through the plants establishment phase will reduce the future cost of replacement and maintenance and improve the amenity value that the trees and shrubs provide.

The Council is responsible for all maintenance of trees, shrubs and vegetation on Council land. This will include undertaking regular inspections and corrective pruning.

All maintenance of street trees and shrubs will be undertaken by skilled Council staff or Council contractors. Maintenance includes pruning, mulching, staking, fertilising if required and where necessary, replacement. The Council will inspect and undertake routine maintenance of trees, shrubs and vegetation on an appropriate cycle to suit the location, plant species and site constraints.

Although the Council will undertake biennial maintenance, there may be other situations where a tree needs to be pruned for health and safety reasons. Such situations include:

- Trees in the Notice Zone or Growth Limit Zone under the Tree Regulations;
- Broken branches overhanging road/footpath/property;
- Branches obstructing traffic and pedestrians;
- Branches obscuring visibility;
- Branches obscuring street lights, security lights and/or creating unsafe zones;
- Large sized and/or amount of deadwood in the tree canopy.

Situations which may or may not be attended to during routine maintenance include issues with leaves, shading or choice of species.

15.1 Requests for Additional Maintenance

Policy 18: Additional Maintenance – Requests for additional maintenance are discouraged and the Council will seek to recover costs.

Explanation

Where additional, non routine, maintenance is requested by a member of the community and it is deemed to be non essential it may be undertaken by the Council on the basis that the cost or part of the cost is met by the person requesting the works. Any requests for maintenance of Council trees are to be directed to Council Parks Officers. The Officers will make the final decision as to whether the maintenance will be carried out or not.

15.2 Trees near Power Lines

Policy 19: Trees near power lines – The Council will maintain trees as required under Electricity Regulations. New and replacement plantings beneath lines will be shrubs or weeping trees which will not interfere with the lines.

Explanation

Overgrown and/or inappropriate trees near power lines are one of the biggest contributors to power outages. Even when trees appear to be well clear of the lines, they still pose a threat to the power supply during storms and strong winds.

The Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003 define the rights and obligations of both tree and line owners in respect of trees bordering the power line zone. Under the regulations, trees are restricted from encroaching within 0.5 to 4.0 metres from power lines. Also tree roots must be no closer than half a metre from underground cables. Failure to comply with the regulations is an offence.

When a tree notice is received from the power company, the Parks Officer will consider each tree on a case by case basis to determine if tree trimming, felling, or objection to the notice is the appropriate approach.

In order to reduce pruning costs, where new or replacement trees are needed under power lines, the Council will plant shrubs or weeping varieties that will not enter the Growth Limit Zone of the lines, or consider replacing trees on a regular basis. The trees may need to have a finite life cycle which relates to the growth habits of the particular tree.

15.3 Privately Owned Trees near Power lines

Policy 20: Privately owned trees near power lines – Private property owners are responsible for clearing their own trees from power lines.

Explanation

If a privately owned tree is obstructing power lines the property owner will need to engage a suitably qualified person to clear the lines (at the owners cost).

15.4 Unauthorised Pruning, Damage, or Removal

Policy 21: Unauthorised pruning, damage, or removal– The Council does not permit unauthorised pruning or removal of Council trees and will take action where necessary.

Explanation

Where the Council discovers unauthorised pruning, damage or removal of Council trees, this could lead to action by the Council, including recovery of costs to replace damaged trees and legal costs if necessary. If those undertaking the pruning injure themselves, bystanders or damage property, the Council will not be liable.

15.5 Collection of Firewood

Policy 22: Collection of Firewood – The Council will consider making timber from fallen trees available to the public on a case by case basis.

Explanation

For health and safety reasons the Council has developed guidelines for members of the public that wish to collect firewood from Council owned land. All members of the public intending to collect firewood must show Council they have all the necessary safety equipment to protect themselves (safety pants or chaps, hard hat, earmuffs, eye protection, no working alone) and other park users. There must be no disruption to the public's recreational enjoyment of the facility whether formal or informal. The chainsaw must be in good working order, including all the safety devices, especially the muffler. Every person operating a chainsaw must have had adequate training and or equivalent experience.

16.0 Tree Adornment

Policy 23: Tree Adornment - To ensure trees are not damaged and to maintain safety no structures, signs, lighting or other adornments will be permitted on Council trees without approval from the Council's Parks Officers.

Explanation

On occasions trees are decorated with lights to provide seasonal colour or are used as a means for mounting of signs or structures.

It is acknowledged that tree-mounted lights could have an impact on adjoining properties or on road users and need to be safely wired. They can also make it difficult for maintenance access. For this reason the Council will be careful and considerate where it agrees to trees being used for this purpose and will be solely responsible for the mounting and removal of tree lights.

The mounting of signs or other structures on or from trees will generally not be encouraged. The Council wishes to avoid situations where trees are subjected to nails, bolts or physical damage to their branch or trunk.

17.0 Commemorative Trees

Policy 24: The Council will consider requests for the planting of commemorative trees. The Council will assess whether the trees are appropriate to the site and area. If planted the tree will become a Council asset and it will be maintained to Council standards.

Explanation

Commemorative trees have been planted on public land throughout the district to commemorate specific people and events. These plantings are often undertaken in

memory of someone that has passed away. Also, visiting dignitaries may plant a tree to provide a lasting memento of their visit.

Commemorative trees hold a special significance to people and their management is, therefore, particularly sensitive. In addition to managing the physical needs of the tree, the Council will record the purpose of the planting and the name of sponsoring individuals or groups.

In assessing the request for the tree planting, the Council will consider whether the tree is appropriate for the site and location. If it is not considered appropriate, the Council will recommend an alternative site.

18.0 Protected Trees

Policy 25: Protected Trees - The Council will support the protection of trees listed on the District Plan Protected Trees Register. The Tree Register will be reviewed every three years.

Explanation

The Wanganui District Plan contains a register of significant trees which are referred to as Protected Trees. These trees include street trees, park trees and trees on private property. Protected trees are retained to safeguard neighbourhood character and natural heritage of the District.

The Protected Trees were identified by undertaking a District wide survey which was also supplemented by public nominations. The Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture Tree Evaluation was used. This evaluation assessed trees based on:

- Size
- Position
- The presence of other trees
- Occurrence of species
- Setting
- Life expectancy
- Form
- Special significance (for example, planted to mark an event in history).

The Council is required to obtain the consent of the tree owner prior to protecting a tree in the District Plan and a formal process of public notification has to be undertaken by the Council. Any person can make a submission supporting or opposing the inclusion of a tree.

Where a tree is registered on the list, removal is not a permitted activity, without resource consent, under the District Plan. Where dieback, disease and considerable deterioration has taken place, removal of vegetation or the complete tree may occur where this assists in containing disease or acts as a safeguard to maintain safety to the public or property.

Trees grow, mature and deteriorate and the Protected Tree Register is only a picture of those identified at a point in time. The list needs to be reviewed. Protected trees will be inspected every three years and the register will be updated to remove any trees which have died or been removed.

The Council will review the current list of protected trees, and consider increasing the number of trees which are protected. The Council will encourage land owners with trees of high amenity in a neighbourhood to have the tree(s) assessed and considered for listing on the District Plan.

The highest priority for conservation of street trees will be older trees and those more critical to the framework e.g. those on major traffic routes or near public areas.

19.0 Notable Trees

Policy 26: Notable Trees – The Council will consider developing a notable tree register for the District

Explanation

There are trees in the district that may not reach the threshold required for listing as Protected Trees; however they may provide important amenity and botanical contributions. Additionally, they are likely to develop to become Protected Trees in the future and will assist to sustain and develop the districts tree resource. In order to recognise the contribution provided by these trees, the Council will consider providing a register of these trees, called Notable Trees, in the District Plan. The Council will seek the assistance of tree experts within the community in developing the notable tree list.

20.0 Other legislation

Other relevant legislation to this policy is:

- The Property Law Act 1952 – section 129C
- Electricity (Hazard from Trees) Regulations 2003.

21.0 Other policy considerations

Other relevant policies include:

- Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2007
- Solar Protection Policy 2005
- Guidelines for encroachment of vegetation on footpaths 2004

22.0 Definitions

Dead means the tree has ceased to be alive and has defoliated (lost its leaves) and/or is defoliating. Not to be confused with deciduous.

Dying means the tree is in decline of vigour.

Gateways are the major roading entrances to the urban area of Wanganui.

Public owned land or spaces is that land owned or administered by the Council or the Crown on behalf of the community and/or the Crown.

Qualified arborist is a person who by possession of a recognised arboriculture degree, diploma or certificate and on the job experience, is familiar with the equipment and hazards involved in arboriculture operations and who has demonstrated the ability to perform the tasks involved. A certificate shall consist of a minimum of 120 credits of learning (i.e. be at least the equivalent of one year's full time study).

STEMS evaluation is the Standard Tree Evaluation Method used for evaluation and valuation of trees, designed specifically for use in New Zealand Landscape.

Street trees are trees located on the grass verge or berm, or occasionally within the paved part of public roads.

Trees are any woody vegetation that has the potential to reach a girth, or aggregate girth of no more than 5 stems, of or exceeding 95mm at breast height (1.4 metres).

Treescape is the overall mix of private and publicly owned trees that contribute to the distinctive identity of an area.

Urban amenity is the natural or physical qualities and characteristics of an area that contribute to people's appreciation of its pleasantness, aesthetic coherence and cultural and recreational attributes.

Appendix 1

Tree Valuation Form

Location of tree	
Species	
Date	
Assessor	

Age of original tree		
Age of new tree		
Age difference		

Tree evaluation points scored	
-------------------------------	--

		Value	Cost
Cost of tree	Wholesale price		
	Evaluation points scored		
Planting cost	Site preparation		
	Transport		
	Planting		
	Cage		
Maintenance cost	Maintenance per year		
	Age difference of trees		
	Sub total		
	GST		
Total wholesale value			
Normal retail margin (100%)			
Negotiable retail value			