

David Spencer for QLDC – Summary of Evidence, 24 June 2016

Chapter 32 Protected Trees – Hearing Stream 3

1. I was initially engaged by the Council from February to April 2015 to review the list of Heritage Trees contained in the schedule to the Operative District Plan (**ODP**) and to provide an assessment of trees put forward by the public for inclusion as protected trees in the Proposed District Plan (**PDP**).
2. My assessment was carried out using the Standard Tree Evaluation Method (**STEM**). This method uses a set of criteria developed for the New Zealand environment. It is a quantitative protocol that gives trees a score based on varying attributes within four criteria:
 - (a) condition;
 - (b) amenity;
 - (c) notability; and
 - (d) value.
3. As an arborist, I was only concerned with the condition and amenity assessments. The final STEM score is the sum of all the points in each of the categories. The assessment relies on the objectivity and experience of the assessor.
4. As a matter of course, when inspecting the trees, I also assessed their health and structural condition using the Visual Tree Assessment (**VTA**) method. This would allow me to pass on any areas of concern to Council.
5. Several submitters expressed concern over the risk posed by certain trees.¹ Using the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment method (**QTRA**) I assessed these trees and found no cause for concern. In addition, in my opinion, the risks highlighted by the submitters can be further mitigated by tree pruning, which is provided for by way of the rules of Chapter 32.

¹ Submitters 359 (Manor Holdings Limited and Body Corporate 364937) item 240, FS1258 (Ayrburn Farm Estate Limited) item 275, 39 (George Ritchie) item 603, 223 (Sam Gent) and 329 (Kerry Hapuku) item 1002; David Spencer Evidence, 1 June 2016, paragraph [9.1] – [9.22].

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6. Submissions were made on the definition of the root protection zone.² In particular it was suggested that the root zone of a columnar tree could be defined by the extent of the outermost branches plus 2 metres. This is not a method recognised by other local authorities in New Zealand or internationally through research. The PDP uses a dripline method to determine tree root zones, the radius of the root zone of a columnar tree being half the height of the tree. I consider that this method is appropriate when used as a guide for when to engage an arborist to provide specialist advice.
 7. The Council Parks Team, has provided a diagram clarifying the dripline for a spreading tree.³ In my view, the Parks Team's diagram is more accurate than the diagram currently contained in the PDP. I recommend that it is included in the chapter and understand Ms Law has included it in her revised chapter.
 8. The frequency of minor trimming was also submitted on by the Parks Team in regard to limiting the pruning to once per calendar year.⁴ I do not believe this is a necessary step as pruning of more than 10% is a discretionary activity, thus limiting pruning to within the tolerable limits of the tree(s).
 9. The Parks Team also submitted that works within the root zone of trees greater than 4 metres in height, in public spaces, within the Arrowtown Residential Historic Management Zone should be a discretionary activity.⁵ I agree with this submission as it allows Council to appropriately manage and control these types of activities as works within the root zone of trees can be detrimental to the health of trees if it is not carried out in an arboriculturally sensitive manner.
 10. In my opinion items 240, 603, 1002 and 1005 have been correctly included in Schedule 37.8 Protected Trees District Wide.⁶ The avenue of Spruce and Larch trees (item 275) located at 343 Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road is a significant feature and the STEM results qualify the trees to receive protected status.⁷

² 179 (Vodafone New Zealand Limited), 191 (Spark New Zealand Trading Limited), 421 (Two Degrees Mobile Limited), 781 (Chorus New Zealand Limited), FS1121 (Aurora Energy Limited); David Spencer Evidence, paragraphs [6.1] – [6.5].

³ Submitter 809 (Parks and Reserves Department of the Council) (**Parks Team**); David Spencer Evidence, paragraphs [6.6].

⁴ Submitter 809 (Parks Team); David Spencer Evidence, paragraphs [7.1] – [7.2].

⁵ Submitter 809 (Parks Team); David Spencer Evidence, paragraphs [8.1] – [8.3].

⁶ Submitters 359 (Manor Holdings Limited and Body Corporate 364937) item 240, 39 (George Ritchie) item 603, 223 (Sam Gent) and 329 (Kerry Hapuku) item 1002, Alan Stewart (49) item 1005; David Spencer Evidence, paragraph [9.1] – [9.23].

⁷ Submitters 365 (Simon Beale) and FS1258 (Ayrburn Farm Estate Limited) item 275, David Spencer Evidence, paragraph [9.4] – [9.10].