

Heritage Trees Issues and Options

The Current Situation

Currently heritage trees are listed in the Inventory of Protected Features in the District Plan (Appendix 3) and on the planning maps. Consent is required for the removal of these heritage trees or for work on or near them.

The purpose of this consent process is to ensure work on these trees is carried out in accordance with accepted arboricultural practices and the trees' health is not compromised. It also protects heritage trees from removal unless they are dead, dying or are compromising the safety of people or property.



Mayor Vanessa van Uden and Councillor Leigh Overton
(Chair of the Strategy Committee)

**“A hotel built on the slopes of Cecil Peak?
A casino on Mount Iron?”**

Not every idea for development is a good one. That's why we have a District Plan. The District Plan helps us manage economic growth and development in a sensible way so that the unique nature and scenic values of the district are retained and protected and development happens in the places that are most appropriate.

This is your chance to help us improve the existing plan, so get involved and have your say.”

We're currently reviewing the District Plan and looking at what works well and what needs to be changed.

As part of this process we've been monitoring the provisions for the protection of heritage trees and how they are working. This has helped us identify some areas that we think can be improved and we'd like your feedback.

You can see the full monitoring report at www.qldc.govt.nz/monitoring.

Issues

The monitoring report raised these issues:

Efficient consent process when tree is dead, dying or unsafe

Consent is required to remove a heritage tree even if it is dead, dying or unsafe. Applications for consent need to include a report from an arborist confirming the state of the tree.

Some consider that if an arborist has confirmed the tree is dead, dying or unsafe the requirement for a consent is an unnecessary expense. However including a permitted standard that only requires a report from an arborist could be abused and healthy heritage trees removed.

Q What do you think?

Work in close proximity to the tree

Two of the current rules control development within 5 metres of the base of any heritage tree and any works, including paving, within the drip line of the tree. The roots of trees are found mostly in the upper 30cm of the soil. In mature trees roots typically extend out to between one to three times the height of the trunk.

The amount of root damage a tree can suffer depends on how close to the tree the cut is made and whether a major root is severed.

The current rules do not adequately protect the root system of mature trees as these are often outside 5m radius of the trunk and outside the drip line (especially of thin trees).

Q Should these rules be altered to protect heritage trees from damage to their roots by increasing the 5m radius?



Maintenance of Hedges

A number of hedges are listed as heritage trees, such as the avenue of hawthorn within the triangle of Domain Road, Speargrass Flat Road and Lower Shotover Road. The current rules allow for pruning of less than 10% of the canopy of heritage trees, which is considered necessary maintenance pruning, without the requirement for a consent. However to maintain a hedge in accordance with arboricultural practices up to 50% of the hedge foliage needs to be removed on an annual basis.

Q Should a different amount of maintenance pruning for heritage hedges be allowed as of right through the District Plan because of their different management requirements?

Additional trees

Currently 154 trees/hedges and groups of trees are listed in Appendix 3 - Inventory of Protected Features and protected through rules in the District Plan. These trees were identified as they meet the criteria for heritage trees.

Q Are there any additional trees/hedges or groups of trees that should be added to this list?



What do you think?

Please send your comments to:
Policy & Planning
Queenstown Lakes District Council
Private Bag 50072, Queenstown 9348
Email services@qldc.govt.nz

Comments should be received by 13 July 2012 although feedback on these issues will be welcome at any time during the review process.

For more information or to comment online visit www.qldc.govt.nz/district_plan_review