



# Shaping Wanganui

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*Other Heritage*



## WANGANUI DISTRICT COUNCIL DISTRICT PLAN REVIEW

### Phase 5: Protected Trees

## ISSUES, OBJECTIVES AND OPTIONS

### DISCUSSION PAPER

March 2013

# 1 Introduction

110 trees or groups of trees are currently listed in the Operative Wanganui District Plan. These trees are identified as significant for historic, cultural, scientific or amenity reasons. They were last assessed in 1993 prior to inclusion in the District Plan using the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture (Inc) Tree Evaluation System which was developed in 1988.

This list of trees, the evaluation system and the objectives, policies and rules for protected trees have not been updated since the District Plan was made operative in 2004.

The list contains spelling errors, location errors, comprises at least 11 listings of trees that have been removed and uses an out of date assessment system that is no longer recognised by professional arborists. There have also been several legislative changes that relate to protected trees.

## 2 Phase Five – Protected Trees

### 2.1 Existing Plan Provisions

Issue I12	Protection of natural environment areas of particular significance.
Objective O11	Natural environment features of particular significance are protected.
Policy P51	Identify and protect the sites or areas of significance according to set criteria

#### Comment

The existing plan provisions do not specifically relate to Protected Trees, nor explain why trees are listed and how much weight to give to any application to remove them. Because the purpose of Protected Trees is not defined in these provisions, it is unclear if Council could prevent any of the existing trees listed from being removed.

#### Options for addressing the issue

(a) Status quo - Provide for Protected Trees, but leave the

Objective and Policy unclear about what the purpose of protection is.

(b) Create new Objectives and Policies that clearly define the purpose of Protected Trees and the community outcomes desired.

(c) Create new Objectives and Policies explaining how the values of a tree is weighted against other Plan Provisions and the life expectancy of the tree.

**Recommendation**

1. Investigate policies relating to options (b) - (c)

**2.2 Potential Issues and Objectives**

<b>Protected Trees</b>	
Issue 1	Trees that make up a part of Wanganui's history, culture or amenity need to be identified and protected from development. Their removal or modification may result in a reduction in amenity and quality of Wanganui's environment.

<b>Protected Trees</b>	
Objective A	The community is well informed of the value (historical, cultural, amenity, ecological) of particular trees (or groups of trees) within the Wanganui District.
Objective B	Wanganui's trees that are identified as having value (historical, cultural, amenity, ecological) to the community are retained for their natural lifespan.

**Comment**

This issue needs to be addressed as the trees in Wanganui are often as old as the heritage buildings and often reflect the values and culture of the community. However, without identification, education and protection, these trees may be lost to development, such as new land uses or subdivision. Trees can also be protected for an ecological reason as they can provide a food source or breeding location for wildlife, which can contribute to the amenity of an area. e.g. encouraging birdsong.

**Options for addressing the issue**

- (a) Status quo – Identify Trees on an ad hoc basis with the same protection for all trees listed, with little information as to why they are protected.
- (b) Create a process that allows for the public to submit new trees for inclusion in the Protected Tree list.
- (c) Consult with local Iwi, New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Returned Services Association, Horticultural Society, Whanganui Regional Heritage Trust and Wanganui Museum Botanical Group to record significant trees that could be listed in the District Plan.
- (d) Create public awareness about why certain trees are protected.
- (e) Protect the trees based on their value and significance, but take into account the lifespan of the tree.
- (f) Relate the value of the tree to the level of protection under the District Plan.

**Recommendation**

- 1. Investigate policies relating to options (b) - (f).
- 2. During the submission process, set up a form (paper and online) for the public to submit potential trees for listing.

**2.3 Potential Policy Provisions**

Policy A	To identify and record the most significant trees in Wanganui. The method and values that will be used to determine significance will be STEM (Standard Tree Evaluation Method).
Policy B	To recognise, protect and retain the particular trees (or groups of trees) that contributes to the sense of place, character and amenity of particular areas of Wanganui.
Policy C	To recognise that trees have a finite lifespan and to encourage the re-planting of prodigy when a significant tree has reached the end of its life.
Policy D	To promote the history, location and special features of significant trees to the public.
Policy E	To ensure that the level of protection on the tree (or group of trees) is level with the significance of the tree.

## **Comment**

Protected Trees are considered worthy of recognition and protection because of their ecological, environmental, landscape, heritage or cultural role. The number of trees protected is only a very small proportion of the total trees in the District, but are those that stand out for their particular contribution to the environment. These policies aim to retain significant trees for the length of their natural lifespan (and prevent the shortening of that lifespan).