



TREE POLICY

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority	Community Facilities
Administrator	Community Facilities Officer
Effective Date	June 2008
Next Review Date	

Background

This policy revises and replaces the "Guidelines for Tree Planting" produced in October 1997, which covered tree planting on Council road reserves within the Ōtorohanga Community. This revised policy includes a section on tree planting in other land managed by Ōtorohanga District Council including recreation reserves (active and passive) cemeteries and pensioner housing. It is intended that this policy will be applicable to all trees on Council owned land in the communities of Ōtorohanga and Kāwhia.

Trees are one of the best single methods of improving and enhancing the urban area however careful consideration needs to be given to selecting the best sites for trees in relation to underground services, road integrity, traffic visibility, safety and security of pedestrians and cyclists. Trees need to be located so they do not cause the icing of any road pavement between the hours of 10.30am and 2.30pm, in accordance with the requirements of the District Plan.

Careful consideration also needs to be given to the best tree species for the site. This relates to tree size, leaf fall, vigour, climatic tolerances or toxicity. All trees need ongoing maintenance and management and this needs to be considered when tree planting is planned.

Trees sometimes need to be removed if they become unsafe, diseased or outgrow the site. They can also pose a risk to adjacent structures such as buildings, roads, footpaths and other services.

Some direction is needed in allowing public involvement in tree planning and placement especially in new subdivisions, other new plantings and tree removal.

Some trees on both private and public land have special significance because of inherent qualities of the tree or their cultural and historic value. These trees need special acknowledgement and protection within this policy and within the District Plan. A standard set of criteria to evaluate trees is referenced in this policy.

Trees in larger plant communities also need consideration. Our forest and scenic reserves at Rotary Park, Phillips Reserve, Davis Reserve and Bob Horsfall Reserve all have significant tree species such as Kauri and Redwoods.

This tree policy connects to other Council strategies and guidelines including the District Plan, the two Community Landscape Plans and the adopted Hamilton City Development Manual.

Purpose for Planting Trees in Urban Areas

Trees planted in urban areas can serve a number of purposes however careful planning is needed to achieve the desired outcomes and effects.

Trees help to define land use and land character, they can be used to break up what is often an endless vista of houses, increase privacy, provide shade and shelter and reduce or soften noise level. They can assist drivers to identify bends and other road definitions and help to reduce glare and reflections.

Planned tree planting can be functional defining space and scale, screening unsightly areas, and used to make a physical barrier or to stop erosion on steep slopes.

Trees are also capable of absorbing air pollutants and carbon dioxide, and release oxygen.

Tree planting can be for aesthetic reasons. They can frame views, enhance land forms and give unity to landscapes. They reduce the hard impacts of roads and buildings with soft colours and textures. Trees

give the town a sense of continuity by linking the present with the past and dramatically display the seasons. They bring nature back into the town. In early October each year when the Kowhai in Ōtorohanga are flowering, large numbers of Tui can be seen in a single tree. Kowhai and other trees that attract birds can enhance the lives of our residents and bring joy to visitors.

The trees in Ōtorohanga add much to the identity and character of the town. The larger trees in Memorial Park, Island Reserve, Windsor Park and the Ōtorohanga Domain all reflect the age and maturity of the town while smaller trees along the roads and streets soften the urban lines and add colour and natural life to the townscape. Despite this Ōtorohanga is lacking enough large trees to have a great visual impact on the visitor driving through the town.

Our forested areas allow passive recreation such as bush walks and jogging, and opportunities for nature study, enjoyment and education. The special trees such as Kauri and Redwoods are also of special interest. Tree communities in Phillips Reserve, Bob Horsfall Reserve, Rotary Park and around the hills flanking Kāwhia are important land stabilisers that mitigate environmental hazards by reducing erosion and flooding.

Trees on Road Reserve in Urban Areas

1. Site Selection

1.1 Services and Utilities

Generally wherever plantings are being proposed some type of service or utility will be encountered and must be taken into consideration before trees are planted. Tree roots are the most common cause of failed services or utilities. In many cases the intrusion of tree roots into sewer and / or stormwater pipes or growing under roads and footpaths can cause expensive repair costs to Council and private owners. The selection of the tree species must be considered carefully to ensure roots do not infringe. Certain tree species such as Poplar and Willows with extensive systems of shallow roots are inherently unsuitable for planting next to utility services.

Acceptable minimum distances from services or utilities to which planting is permitted, are included in Table A below.

TABLE A - MINIMUM TREE PLANTING DISTANCES FROM SERVICES AND UTILITIES, AND MAXIMUM EXPECTED HEIGHT OF TREES

Type of Service or Utility	Trees and Shrubs up-to 2 metres	Trees 2-5 metres	Trees Over 5 metres
Water Main	300mm	1 metre	3 metres
Sanitary Sewer	300mm	1 metre	3 metres
Stormwater Main	300mm	1 metre	3 metres
Telecom	300mm	1 metre	2 metres
Underground Power	300mm	1 metre	3 metres
Gas Main	300mm	1 metre	3 metres
Kerb & Channel	600mm	1 metre	2 metres
Footpath	500mm	1 metre	2 metres
Standard Streetlight	4 metres	4 metres	6 metres
Overhead Power	Discretion required	Discretion required	Not permitted

In some circumstances tree root directors may allow trees to be planted closer to underground services. Their use and location must be approved by the Engineering Manager prior to planting.

1.2 Road and Property Access Splay

Trees have often been planted in places which restrict the visibility of road users at intersections or private accesses. Traffic or pedestrian safety is an important reason to control where trees are planted in relation to road boundaries. Splay areas which must remain free from tree plantings are included in Diagram A.

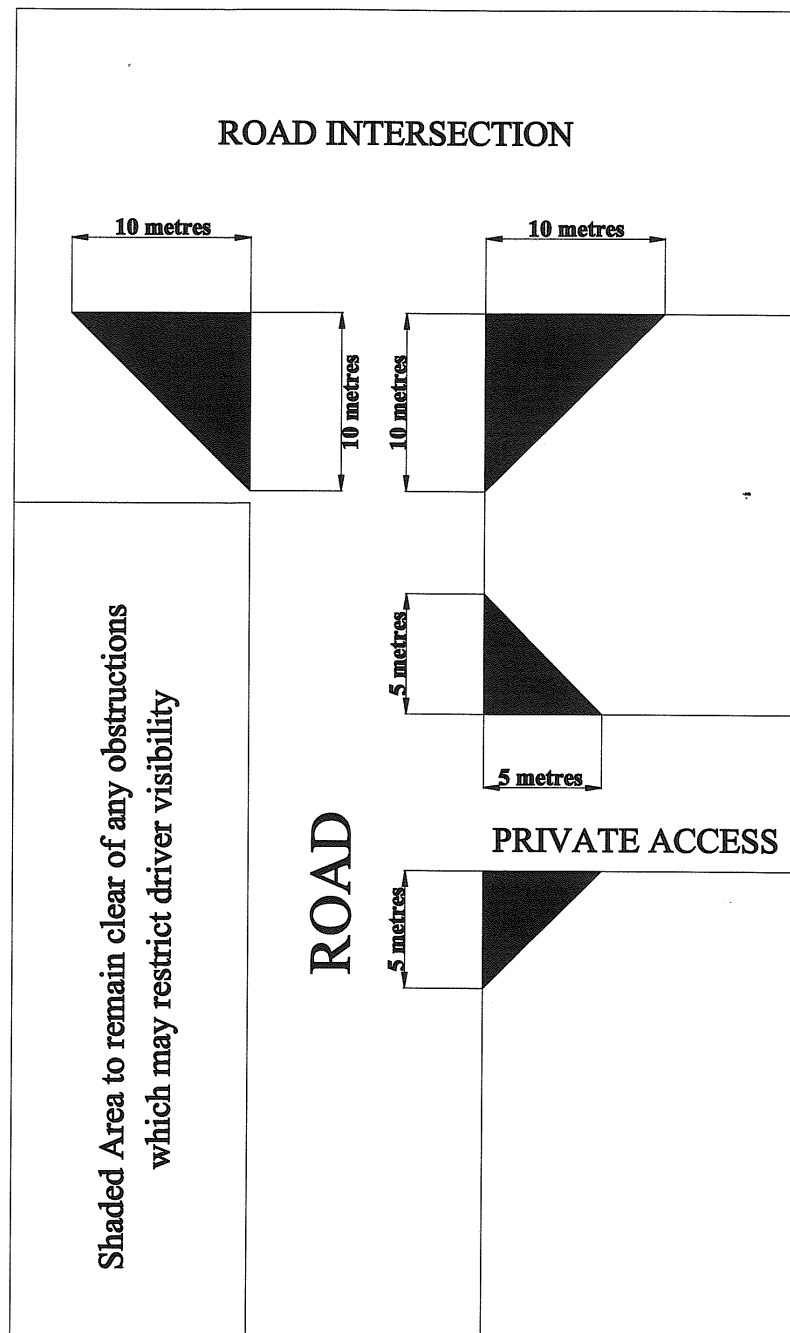


DIAGRAM A - ROAD AND PROPERTY ACCESS SPLAYS

2. Tree Selection

Appropriate selection of tree species prior to planting is essential and shall take account of maximum expected tree height, root span, site tolerance, maintenance, establishment and access to mowing. Species chosen should not spread seeds that can germinate and become a nuisance elsewhere. The two Phoenix Palms flanking Tainui Street in Kāwhia seed up to one kilometre away and are a good example of a poor selection decision. Tree species suitable for the Kāwhia and Ōtorohanga are detailed in the two Community Landscape Plans.

2.1 Maximum Expected Height

When considering the height of the tree, it is important to consider possible undesirable shade or visibility loss to private properties. Consultation with private property owners is seen as an essential part of acceptance to the proposed planting. Overhead power lines and street lighting splays also need to be considered.

2.2 Site Tolerance

Plants used must be able to cope with compacted, poorly drained, urban soils. Where service-free tree planting corridors are available, relief of soil compression prior to planting should be undertaken. This will improve drainage and aeration in the soil. The trees need to tolerate urban conditions of heat, drought, poor drainage, pollution and pedestrian and vandal abuse.

2.3 Low Maintenance Planting

Design of planting must be appropriate to its function, the maintenance available and the need to reduce existing maintenance in all areas. This is possible while still creating a planting framework and enhancing the environment. The use of small trees and shrubs tends to close off the private landscape from the street rather than integrating it. This happens because they occupy and obstruct the street space at the critical level for safe visibility and views into or from intersections and private properties. Drivers, pedestrians and domestic viewers are all affected. The result is a maintenance cost to maintain safe visibility and should be avoided.

2.4 Establishment

For the first two to three years after planting, trees should normally be staked. This is also the period when most vandal damage occurs on street trees. It requires frequent monitoring of recent planting to quickly rectify any limb or trunk damage, and recording of trees removed for replacement. The establishment period is critical for the long term development and health of all street trees.

2.5 Access to Mowing

The mowing of grassed areas on roadside berms and reserve areas is essential to the up keep and presentation of Council areas. Positioning and selection of tree species is vital to the accessibility for continued mowing of grassed areas.

3. Trees On Private Property Causing a Public Nuisance

Trees and shrubs on private properties sometimes encroach over boundaries and become a nuisance to users of roads and footpaths. Where the cost of removing these obstructions is estimated to be less than \$50.00, Council will request in writing the property occupier remove them within 14 days or Council will

remove them at no charge to the occupier. Where the cost to remove these obstructions is estimated to be more than \$50.00, Council will again request the occupier remove them within 14 days or that they will be removed and the cost recovered from the occupier. The trimming of hedges often falls into this category.

Trees General

4. Community Landscape Plans

Both the Ōtorohanga and Kāwhia townships have approved Community Landscape Plans. These plans declare in broad terms the desired outcomes of planned tree planting. They include the street location of planting and tree types and the rationale for selecting a particular tree species is explained.

These plans are revised regularly and public submissions are called and considered. This is the best opportunity for the public to be involved in the planning of our tree planting in our towns.

5. Public Consultation and Notification

Public consultation and notification are important legal requirements in local government planning. The planning of landscape development and tree planting are no exception.

Public submissions shall be called for during the revision of the Landscape Plans and public notification shall be made when trees are felled in circumstances other than emergency hazard mitigation. In such circumstances the relevant Community Board shall make the final decisions.

In new streets or subdivisions tree planting not covered in the Landscape Plans is to be approved first by Council's landscape design consultant and then the relevant Community Board. Residents or property occupiers will be notified that a tree will be planted outside their property and they can recommend the desired location within the guidelines set out in Section 3. Residents or property occupiers do not have the right to exclude a tree outside their property but can make submissions to the Community Board who shall make the final decision.

6. Tree Maintenance

Trees need to be managed and maintained to keep or develop desired shapes. The shape and form of a tree is managed not only for aesthetic presentation but for the health of the tree, prevention of damage and disease, and more difficult management later. Street trees in particular need to be pruned also to prevent intrusions onto the roadway and footpaths. This work is done annually in mid-winter before bud-burst. Tree care is specialised work and in most circumstances shall only be carried out by qualified arborists.

7. Removing Trees

There are times when trees need to be felled. They can be damaged in strong winds, by fire, by vandalism or disease, and be left in a hazardous state. If damaged trees are posing an obvious hazard to people or property they shall be felled as soon as possible. If there is some doubt about the safety of a damaged mature tree over 5 metres high a qualified arborist shall be consulted.

Some trees can outgrow their space and damage or pose a risk to services, roading, private or public property, or cause other nuisance. In such cases the proposed removal of one or more trees of 5 metres

or more in height in an urban area shall be considered by the relevant Community Board, who shall determine whether public consultation is required before a final decision is made.

Similar consideration shall also be applied to any tree planted for memorial purposes, a record of which is contained in a register kept by Council.

Younger, immature trees may be removed without consultation. This typically occurs when trees are vandalised or it becomes apparent that the tree is not suited to that location.

Removal and disposal of large trees shall only be carried out by qualified staff or outside contractors. This hazardous work is also a notifiable activity and the Labour Department shall be notified as required before work commences. All safety procedures, including a Safety Plan and Temporary Traffic Management Plan, must be prepared and strictly adhered to.

8. New Urban Subdivisions

Ōtorohanga District Council employs Hamilton City Council's *'Hamilton City Development Manual'* as a guideline in respect of development standards. This comprehensive and up-to-date manual has well defined policies and engineering designs, and shall be used for the planning of tree planting in any new subdivisions in the District.

9. Protected Trees

It is proposed that there will be provision in the revised District Plan for the protection of significant trees in the Ōtorohanga District. These trees can be on private or public land, and can be individual specimens or significant groups of trees.

Trees can have historic or cultural value that is associated with or commemorates historic events. The Kahikatea tree known as 'Huiputea' and 'Lord Bledisloe's Chestnut' are good examples. Some trees can have spiritual values such as Kāwhia's famous Pohutukawa 'Tangi te Korowhiti' and 'Papa o Karewa'. The growing reverence now given to Memorial Park, especially on Anzac Day, and the trees planted to remember those from local communities that died during military service, have a similar value.

Some trees have special botanic or ecological values, the Redwoods and Kauri in Rotary Park are good examples. They may be rare in the region or in New Zealand. Ōtorohanga District has New Zealand's most southerly Kauri growing naturally in native forests and the ancient Pohutukawa on the Aotea peninsula are the District's only significant cormorant nesting sites.

Other trees are useful landmarks, with the Woolworth's Plane Tree and the Beattie Home Copper Beech being good examples.

10. Tree Evaluation

The 'Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture' (RNZHI) have developed a standard method of assessing the value of a tree which has been proposed for protection within New Zealand District Plans. This method and application is included in Rule 2.2 of the Hamilton City Development Manual. It is proposed that this be adopted in the revised Ōtorohanga District Plan.

11. Private Commemorative Planting on Public

From time to time members of the public wish to plant trees on public land in memory of deceased family or friends.

At present there are a number of trees planted in Council reserves to commemorate people who had no connection to the District in our reserves and where there is no record of approval been given, for example the Kauri trees in WW2 Memorial Park and in Kāwhia Cemetery a Totara tree has been planted with a commemorative plaque. There is a similar planting and plaque in Rotary Park.

Memorial planting on public land shall only be allowed if the deceased has significant connection to the District and / or a strong case is presented to and approved by the relevant Community Board or by Council for the rural area.

Reporting

No additional reporting is required

Records Management

Staff must retain all records relevant to administering this policy in a recognised Council recordkeeping system

Related Legislation and Documents

- Hamilton City Development Manual August 2007
- Kāwhia Community Landscape Plan 2005
- Ōtorohanga Community Landscape Plan 2006
- Ōtorohanga District Plan