

Hearing Evidence:

Plan Change 2: Protected Trees

Section 42A Hearing Report

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The Submitter:

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The submitter has served a lifetime in engineering in the fields of automotive, heavy equipment, marine, aviation, building air-handling systems and building operational management. Employment within the petroleum industry included the management of the Central and Production laboratories of BP Oil New Zealand while current employment involves the planning and direction for maintenance of around one hundred properties on Auckland's North Shore.

Recreation interests include the planning developing and maintenance of a modest property at Ngahinapouri which includes in-excess of twenty significant trees cultured on site and from seedlings sourced from the local Memorial Domain trees originally planted for and in remembrance of lost sons of residents in the wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-1945.

The submitter has not been able to index the elements of the submission to the proposed Plan Change 2 Document to this time nor has any study been committed specifically to the scoring systems other than pursuing the detail of the initial submissions and responses

Perpetuity

Henry Ford, One of the world's greatest industrialists built an enormous factory at Dearborne, Michigan alongside other large manufacturers in the Detroit region, and these flourished. Today, around 100 years later Detroit is a social disaster with abandoned sites, run-down housing and social un-rest with all of this occurred within the lifetime of a significant tree. It is of interest that Henry Ford drew away from affairs at the factory to attempt to create the atmosphere and essence of his youth at Green Field, Fair Lane where he could recreate the farm, homesteads, schools buildings and streets; he could create it all he had the wealth the power, means and yet of course, he could not create mature trees.

The Case For Nature and for Trees in the Urban Environment

In 1898 just six years after Cambridge became a Borough Englishman Ebenezer Howard produced a manual for the ideal community integrating aspects from the rural, residential and commercial aspects

of the community. Howard had experience of the “slums” of London, the over-crowding, the pestilence, diseases and violence and he formed the belief that a town designed to integrate the three aspects of “ideal” life into design a town could flourish and provide for a better well-being for its residents. Howard aimed to reduce the alienation of humans and society from nature and hence advocated garden cities and Geogism. Howard is believed by many to be one of the great guides to the town planning movement with many of his principles being used in modern town planning. The first town, Letchworth, some 48 kilometres from London was the first town. The circular format was unusual but within the concept were green spaces and trees, areas to transit, for recreation, for shelter and this proved a revelation. Such was the success of the town that a significant improvement in health along with a reduction in diseases and violence was recorded. Howard went on to have a second town of Welwyn Gardens developed as a private venture with both towns (cities?) today being emulated or at least studied to permit City planners to provide the principal aspects for their respective citizens.

Trends toward high density

The towns of Waipa hold the three aspects and these have been amplified in the case of Cambridge by the foresight which has delivered the significant treescape. It seems therefore folly to plan toward the opposing concept of high-density accommodation in either residence or commerce. What is the need? No town of Waipa will have a comprehensive public transport service in the near future; it simply would not be viable. Compressing the occupancy does to reduce the load on utilities rather it simply intensifies (and overloads) them.

The submitter’s experience operating within developments has constructed a view that a move away from the “1/4 acre section to “Cheek-by-jowl” living is not in keeping with the psyche of New Zealanders, folk used to space, territory and distance. There is little discretion in being able to hear the sounds of the neighbour, be that their music, appliances, debates or their bed at night yet, town planning seems to be unrelenting in its quest to have all dwell there in that tight confined controllable space. The construction of apartments is directly opposed to the existence of significant trees; they are always there in the artist’s rendition when the hard sell is underway but in reality significant trees and high density development are not bed-fellows. So why sacrifice the tree? All evidence would appear to demand the presence of a natural element.

The Mechanical Value of Trees

The tall deciduous tree is a marvel in its provision for shelter and light control. In summer the canopy provides an expansive and comforting shade while in winter fully automatically, it opens to provide for the penetration of the sunlight to permeate to the ground, improving light for visibility, warming the ground and preserving the under-planting. It would be totally unrealistic to assume some magic machine or mechanism to provide this service over such broad an area.

One tree of stature may make a statement but not a theme; the synergistic effect of a stand of trees contributes from the synergistic effects on wind deflection, strength and the rhythm of the repetition. Be the trees in a circle, cluster or line the effect is apparent. Streetscapes can form lines while the perimeter planting of parkland, be it squared or round, forms a circle. Grand boulevards of significant

trees must be planned and, due to their term to maturity (and on) they require perpetuity commitment. These trees by themselves will not however produce the full benefits of canopy. A comprehensive canopy can lift the cruel winter South-Easterly wind or the persistent North Wester over the town. As a single entity, a tree will have an effect on the wind, light and aspect but for the full synergistic effects of canopy to prevail, the presence of other such trees across the landscape is necessary and as this is not public land it takes the contribution of the respective land owners be they residential or commercial to deliver the full concept, hence the enhanced value of the protected trees on private property.

Clusters of significant trees must include the English Oak and London Plane in the case of Cambridge if the character, essence and theme are to be maintained. Further significant trees in new plots could repeat the theme or include edibles including Chestnut, Walnut, Ginko and the larger varieties of macadamia for example.

Atrophication

Given just 40 protected trees on private property within Waipa District, an attrition rate of one tree every two years and even if these trees were replaced, the first replacement would not be mature when the last expired leaving a whole generation to be deprived of the full perspective of the significant tree; it being a further 20 years before a 100 year-old maturing tree to gain its maximum. There is detailed record of a political Premier being advised that a significant tree would require 100 to grow to its full extent and to which his reply was; "Then there is no time to waste; you must commence planting today!"

Strategies in Defence of Protected Trees

Car yards are simply tennis courts without lines; they offer nothing by way of aspect and call for no architectural contribution what-so-ever. These are the simplest commercial site and should hold little by way of weight of demand for their presence. The quoted example of the English Oak producing "debris" onto exhibited vehicles is a perfect example of the expediency and selfishness that can prevail within commercial interests. The loss of a tree of this magnitude is of far greater cost than all of the cars that will ever be displayed within the drip line, but it will make-way for a new workshop, showroom or commercial barn to follow given the space now unfettered. It is easy to breeze into town and speak eloquently about "what Cambridge wants". The secret of understanding planning is to work out why people want to go where they go. Residents don't move to Cambridge, I suspect, to change it; conversely they seek to be there among the quaint, the order, the history and the trees. Nobody moved town to live next door to an existing car yard.

Today's "red shed" is tomorrow's Go-Kart track and next years demolition trading barn. Commercial properties have a varying popularity, demand and thereby, life cycle. Inconvenient buildings can be demolished within a day and a new one erected within six month; not so a landscape of trees. The great housing schemes of the United Kingdom, the Midlands, London and the industrial North from the industrial revolution to the 1980's produced ugly edifices now condemned for their inhumanity and inefficiency. The Eastern Bloc countries followed suit in an even more tasteless form and duplicity. The Grenfell fire in London recently was exacerbated by the application of cladding, cladding applied in a

vain attempt to mask the ugliness. Some new apartments provide for a contemporary delight fresh “off the canvas” however once the new owner has made or lost his speculative funds we have the second owner who brings their own atmosphere of demand and on to the third and fourth where, and as there are now new apartments all shiny and elite elsewhere attracting those who had bought into the original aspect and micro-community, the sincerity of the interest in the property and environs wanes; there is then a trend toward the utility and mundane and social pressures intensify.

Scaling Trees

While a scoring system (STEM in this case) can be seen to provide the nirvana for calculating the case for the protection of trees, it can just as easily be employed to condemn them. Once you have a mathematical score it becomes a mechanism for all to use. Given the described subjective feature of any assessment of a tree there is opening for legal contest to trend the score up or down at whim. In one case the tree lives on to prosper and contribute and the other it is cut short, done, finished with, to be replaced with the convenient mechanism of the day from which someone hopes for their fortune or the profit from their speculation before they too move on. When comparing one scoring system with another it is important to identify where critical, comparative points lie. A comparison between the Fahrenheit and Centigrade scales reveals two critical points 37°C and 100°C which become 98.6°F and 212°F. The lower figure in either scale represents us..our body temperature; the higher number represents the boiling point of water (at sea level). With a change from one scale to another we don't suddenly boil nor does a cup of tea at 100°F feel warm! We simply have two different scales determining the same result albeit, represented by different numbers. It is of interest that both equate at -40° a temperature which otherwise holds no relevance to us or indeed the other temperature points.

So if we have determined by careful measure that there are a number of trees within the community on private land that are worth protecting there would need to be sound reason in introducing an alternative scale for that result to differ. It would appear that what we have between the NZIH and STEM scales are common appraisals, subjective valuing of the observations and a scale (STEM) weighted with reason to deny the tree which was not so amplified within the NZIH scale. There is then serious risk of this presenting prejudice against the tree in favour of the expedient, the speculative and the subjective where, under the NZIH scale, and indeed on one side of the Bell curve of both measures, there is value for the tree yet with the new STEM scale the denial of the tree is more evidently weighted while the NZIH measure much less so.

Surely a well supported and consistent employment of a scoring system and critical parameters is defensible in court regardless of what others choose to do? So what is the value on either scale where equivalence (or the status Quo) prevails? The number is certainly below 114 and likely around 110 on the STEM scale so the do or die 10 points that appear between the scales are those that oppose the tree by inconvenience, ploy, leaves, acorns or drips? Given this and the subsequent result of continual application there must become under the measure, a reducing number of trees particularly where replacement trees not as well protected by the score as older ones and yet, without being young they can never be old.

The case for Cambridge

Is a tree such an inconvenience? In the United Kingdom it is possible to own and redevelop historic buildings and indeed, places. People continue to seek them out despite the cost, inconvenience and the maintenance demands. A thatched roof has but a short life, thatchers are few and reeds expensive yet that upkeep as demanded by authority appears not to be an impediment. For Cambridge to be a town of trees it cannot plan and implement a tree policy in equivalence to everyone else otherwise by attrition and demand Ultimately, Cambridge will have the same number of trees, or better described as “as few” as elsewhere. While it would be pleasant to expect that other towns and cities would wish to emulate Cambridge, if Cambridge is to be noticeably about trees then it has to exhibit more of them than anyone else, big trees, grand trees, significant trees and trees of every design and concept where they are appropriate. Any scoring system must cater for more trees, more planting, more protection than anywhere else; otherwise Cambridge can have the roof panorama of Pokeno, the aged industrialisation of Penrose the aging houses of Bennydale and feel elite because we had by then made it that way. So we, the brothers and sisters of the great New Zealanders, followers of Rutherford, Hillary, Don Clark, Colin Meads, Britton, Jackson; the children of Cambridge, Te Awamutu, Ngahinapouri, or Pirongia cannot preserve a tree?

Street planting itself will never supplant the stands of significant tree. Given the pressures of land requirement for roads, parking, footpaths, utilities of power, water, waste, stormwater both underground and surface and communications there is pressure on berm space with the latter being the sole accommodation for the street tree. Street-side trees are, too often expendable due to re-building and maintenance requirements. Poor choices of variety for street-side trees, the Acers, Pohutukawa and others with aggressive root systems can interfere with, or even destroy utility networks. This then dictates smaller trees with a slower rate of growth but with spindly stems are favoured. These are not and will never be, significant trees and can never be counted as such. Therefore the continued planting of significant trees within mature and especially embraced into and across new developments of communities is critical if generations ahead are to experience them and the aspects and the well-being investment they bring.

Questions for town planners of Waipa District

- What is proposed to provide for those owners who wish to plant, culture and preserve a significant tree. I read of the parameters of placement and care of choice but what is there to assist and promote the planting and designation of significant trees on private property? As we are aware that trees take time to grow is there facility to nurse preferred or preferably generic, trees to the maximum “potted” stock to permit some gain on time to be had? Are stocks of these to be free when designated? Are these then to hold some special status to account for their innocence and youth until there age is sufficient to cross the scoring threshold? The cost of maintaining a tree has been raised and for the significant tree free of the tortures of manicuring the cost is minimal; less that a flower garden, roses or shrubbery a two-man team would be able to attend (I speculate) 10 trees a day permitting annual attention of 400 trees in 40 days. It is this low level of demand which radiates the perception of a higher cost to the uninitiated as

when maintenance occurs it requires the use of assets and the work becomes visible while in truth on the forecast of 40 days for 160 days the equipment would be useful elsewhere or in store.

- Where a tree is removed by consent is there a requirement for another to be planted?
- Where a tree is removed without consent is another to be planted (or two?)
- As a new tree will not score as high on the STEM scale is the tree removed will the new tree then be “grand-fathered” under the score of the tree removed to ensure its survival to maturity (and beyond)?
- Is there a program to zone areas within towns specifically for the planting and fostering of significant trees?
- Is there an In-planting of replacement, equivalent trees to retain continuity?
- Is there a requirement for significant trees to be included in any number of sections within any new development? Within private sections? On specified land?
- How many trees per capita/1000 are planned (ideally) and to be protected within Waipa at any one time?
- Without these answers there can be no plan. Without a plan there can be no realisation.

Without the realisation of a robust tree protection program, when our grand-children’s children pass Cambridge... by whatever means... the town will be just another smudge on the screen with nothing to describe of what was there before there was nothing to be there for.

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