Street Tree Policy

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Reviewed	Street Tree Advisory Group May 2010
Adopted	Masterton District Council May 2010

Contents

1.0 Rationale

Masterton District Council wishes to enhance the built environment and urban landscape through the effective and sustainable management of a street tree population. This contributes to the Council's stated LTCCP outcomes through sustainable use of the environment and creates a place that is attractive to residents and visitors.

2.0 Introduction

Masterton District Council (MDC) Street Tree Policy (the Policy) outlines those principles, policies, plans and practices that will ensure the long-term sustainability of the district street tree resource.

The Policy refers to tree protection provisions of the District Plan; the role of the Street Tree Advisory Group (STAG); and the management objectives within the Parks and Reserves Maintenance Contract.

This policy aims to direct the species selection, operational practices, and removal/ succession of trees within the built environment and urban landscape and will be reviewed five yearly.

3.0 Street Trees – The Asset

3.1 Asset Description

At present Masterton District has a total of 1436 street trees that belong to 27 different genres recorded on MDC register. Seventy five percent are classified as mature and have varying maintenance requirements to accommodate infrastructure, comply with regulatory dimensions, or continuation of past practice. Eighteen percent are classified as young and have been form-pruned to ensure good health. The final seven percent of the street tree population are classified as juvenile and are progressing well.

Most trees are in good health with pest and disease having minimal effect. The 26 oriental plane trees in Dixon St are the worst affected by the presence of pathogens. Of the total street tree population 30% are currently being pollarded, which is a result of arboriculture practices which will no longer be applied to new plantings. It is advised that these trees continue to be pollarded annually for the remainder of their useful life.

3.2 Levels of Service

Street trees are a distinctive component of the built environment and urban landscape and levels of service are measured by the benefits they deliver. Street trees assist in modifying and minimising some of the less desirable aspects of urban environments such as air pollution, noise, degraded water quality, water run-off, wind exposure, and erosion.

Street trees also provide substantial benefits to the ecological health and sustainability of our urban built environments. They provide habitat for our important

indigenous insects and bird life. Street trees improve the environment by absorbing, filtering and purifying the basic elements of air and water as well as softening the harshness of the urban environment.

3.3 Risk Management

Street trees may sometimes be seen as incompatible with the structural elements of the urban environment and can be considered to cause 'more trouble than they are worth'. Such opinions generally place little weight on the wide ranging values and benefits of street trees, focussing instead on potential restrictions or constraints on infrastructure and property development.

It is recognised however that street trees may create problems including interference with underground and overhead utility services; leaf fall blocking drains and stormwater channels; traffic safety issues related to reduced visibility; excessive shading and obstruction of views.

Additionally, problems of a social nature, such as perceived safety at night and disputes between neighbours can also arise from street trees. It is also accepted that some species of trees can trigger allergic reactions at various times of the year.

These risks are mitigated through good planning, creative development design and selection of appropriate species. Prior to any decision to establish, retain, maintain or remove street trees MDC officers assess potential conflict with utilities and roading assets and the likely impact on neighbours and the wider community.

3.4 Lifecycle Management

The organic character of trees and this comparatively harsh setting makes it critically important to properly manage the lifecycle of the population as a whole. Whilst protecting trees is a central principle of the Policy, it needs to be recognised that individual trees are not permanent fixtures.

Street trees require specialised ongoing management in order to assist their survival in the highly-modified built environment. Built environments often put trees under stress through water deficit, soil compaction, low nutrient levels, air pollution, elevated air temperatures, altered light levels or physical damage. Stressed trees are more susceptible to pests and diseases and will frequently exhibit a shortened life span.

In order to avoid significant degradation of street trees it is necessary to maintain trees across a range of age classes. Without a cycle of planned replacement and renewal the incremental loss of trees will create gaps and/or serious long-term reductions in street tree population. This inevitably leads to the degradation of the built environment and urban landscape.

This Policy provides a framework for on-going condition assessment and planned renewal of street trees.

4.0 Policy Relationships

4.1 District Plan and the Policy

The District Plan provides the statutory mechanism for the protection of district trees, as directed by the Resource Management Act (1991). The provisions in the District Plan apply to public and private lands.

The Street Tree Policy provides policies and guidelines for the management of street trees on council land, but these do not carry the weight of law. The Policy cannot override the statutory responsibilities in the District Plan or Acts and regulations under New Zealand law.

The Policy advocates for the protection of trees through education and advice, but does not apply additional policy for the management of trees that are protected under the District Plan. Figure 1 summarises the relationship between the District Plan and the Policy

District Plan	Street Tree Policy
Purpose Regulatory and non-regulatory provisions for the protection and maintenance of trees on private and public lands, through: (a) Identification of Notable Trees in a schedule in the District Plan. (b) Identification of Significant Natural Areas in a schedule in the District Plan. (c) Applying standards in the District Plan to Notable and Amenity Trees and Significant Natural Areas. (d) Placing conditions on resource consents, and (e) Education and advice to landowners Administered By: Council Planning Department	Purpose Effective and sustainable management of the street tree resource on road reserves owned and/or administered by the Masterton District Council through: (a) Strategic planning (b) Species selection and planting (c) Best practise maintenance (d) Removal and succession planting (e) Education, advice and consultation with affected property owners. Administered By: MDC Parks and Recreation Department

Figure 1. Relationship between the District Plan and Street Tree Policy

4.2 Parks Maintenance Contract and the Policy

The Street Tree Policy provides policies and guidelines for the management of street trees on council owned and/or administered road reserve. These guidelines and policies are the foundation for the specification of the Parks maintenance Contract.

The specification of the Parks Maintenance Contract outlines the frequency and standard of works to be undertaken as well as the area covered by the contract. Where differences are found between the contract and the Policy, the Policy shall prevail and a variation to the contract will be prepared.

4.3 Role of STAG

The Street Tree Advisory Group (STAG) shall consist of two Councillors, three Council Officers and two members of the community. The role of the STAG includes development of this Policy and the final Planting Plan/ Species Location Map. Further, STAG shall hold bi-annual meetings to:

(a) Confirm that proposed works are consistent with the Policy
(b) Review completed works to ensure consistency with the Policy
(c) Consider complaints and recommendations from the community
(d) Mediate street tree related disputes with affected neighbouring property owners
(e) Approve planting of a species that is not already included on the approved species list and removals and/or non-replacement of street trees
(f) Monitor the effectiveness of this Policy and recommend variations to Council as required

5.0 Policy & Procedures

5.1 Species Selection

Policy 5.1.1

To develop and maintain a district planting theme that reflects the unique natural and cultural environment of Masterton. This shall be achieved through:

(a) Development of a final Planting Plan/ Species Location Map to which all new plantings shall conform
(b) Compiling a list of approved street tree species (see appendices) and only allow trees from that list to be planted unless otherwise approved by STAG
(c) Removing and not allowing new planting of species that are known to cause allergic reactions or otherwise present health or safety risks
(d) Ensuring that species proven to be unsuitable are not replanted

5.2 Location

Policy 5.2.1

To place trees where there will be least interference to underground and overhead utility services. This shall be achieved through:

(a) Use of service plan overlays to identify tree locations prior to planting
(b) Prohibit planting under overhead utility lines any tree with a maximum mature height that encroaches on the distances from lines specified in the Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003
(c) Prohibit planting under 11kv lines when older specimens have been removed.
(d) Conforming with NZS 4404; 2004 section 7.3

Policy 5.2.2

To ensure street trees and other plants do not compromise safety of vehicular traffic. This shall be achieved through:

(a) Pruning to ensure a clear line-of-sight as specified in NZS 4404:2004 section 7.3 or other approved standards as used from time to time
(b) Selecting species with frangibility values in accordance with approved standards
(c) Not planting on narrow or small traffic islands and berms where maintenance and irrigation is impracticable

Policy 5.2.3

To have all new planting subject to the ‘street tree selection criteria’. This shall be achieved through:

(a) Development of planting assessment criteria to be used in the decision making process for new plantings (see appendices).
(b) Survey street residents prior to planting to establish level of support for new plantings
(c) Survey street residents following planting to establish level of support for new plantings

5.3 Street Tree Management

Policy 5.3.1

To ensure street trees are managed using best Arboriculture practices. This shall be achieved through:

(a) Using only qualified contractors with a minimum of NZQA level 4 arboriculture qualifications.
(b) Subscribing to appropriate arboriculture publications
(c) Staff attending appropriate arboriculture conferences and workshops

Policy 5.3.2

To develop and maintain an inventory/ database that provides appropriate information for effective decision-making and management of the street tree population. This shall be achieved through:

(a) Location and mapping of all trees using GPS and GIS technologies
(b) Identify, photograph and record species and growing environment
(c) Including specifications in Parks maintenance contract for carrying out condition assessments and reporting.

Policy 5.3.3

To ensure funding is in place to enable progressive completion/ fulfilment of the final Planting Plan/ Species Location Map. This shall be achieved through:

(a) Preparation of annual planting lists and cost estimates to establish a minimum of 25 new trees (in addition to renewals and maintenance) annually to be planted on existing streets
(b) Applying to Council for funding during each annual plan process to meet cost of new planting, renewal planting and maintenance of street trees
(c) Ensuring street tree planting is part of subdivision resource consent conditions.

5.4 Tree Removal and Replacement

Policy 5.4.1

To generally protect and maintain street trees but carry out removals if:

(a) Trees have been identified as causing a risk to safety of residents and passersby, or vehicles/ other property, and that risk cannot otherwise be economically or practicably mitigated.
(b) A tree has been identified as causing allergic reactions or otherwise presents a risk to the health of residents and passersby.

(c) Trees cause excessive shading, excessive leaf drop, branch or root encroachment or unreasonable loss of views for neighbouring properties and the problem cannot otherwise be economically or practicably remedied
(d) A tree is nearing end-of-life or is otherwise in poor health and cannot economically or practicably be restored to good health

Policy 5.4.1

To generally replace trees that have been removed except when replacement will cause the same problem for which the removal was carried out. This will be achieved through:

(a) Establishing/ growing-on to a suitable size replacements for trees that have been assessed as being in poor condition, nearing end-of-life, or unsuitable size/ species for the present location.
(b) Replacement of trees within 12 months of removal when it is deemed appropriate to carry out renewal planting

5.5 Community Communication

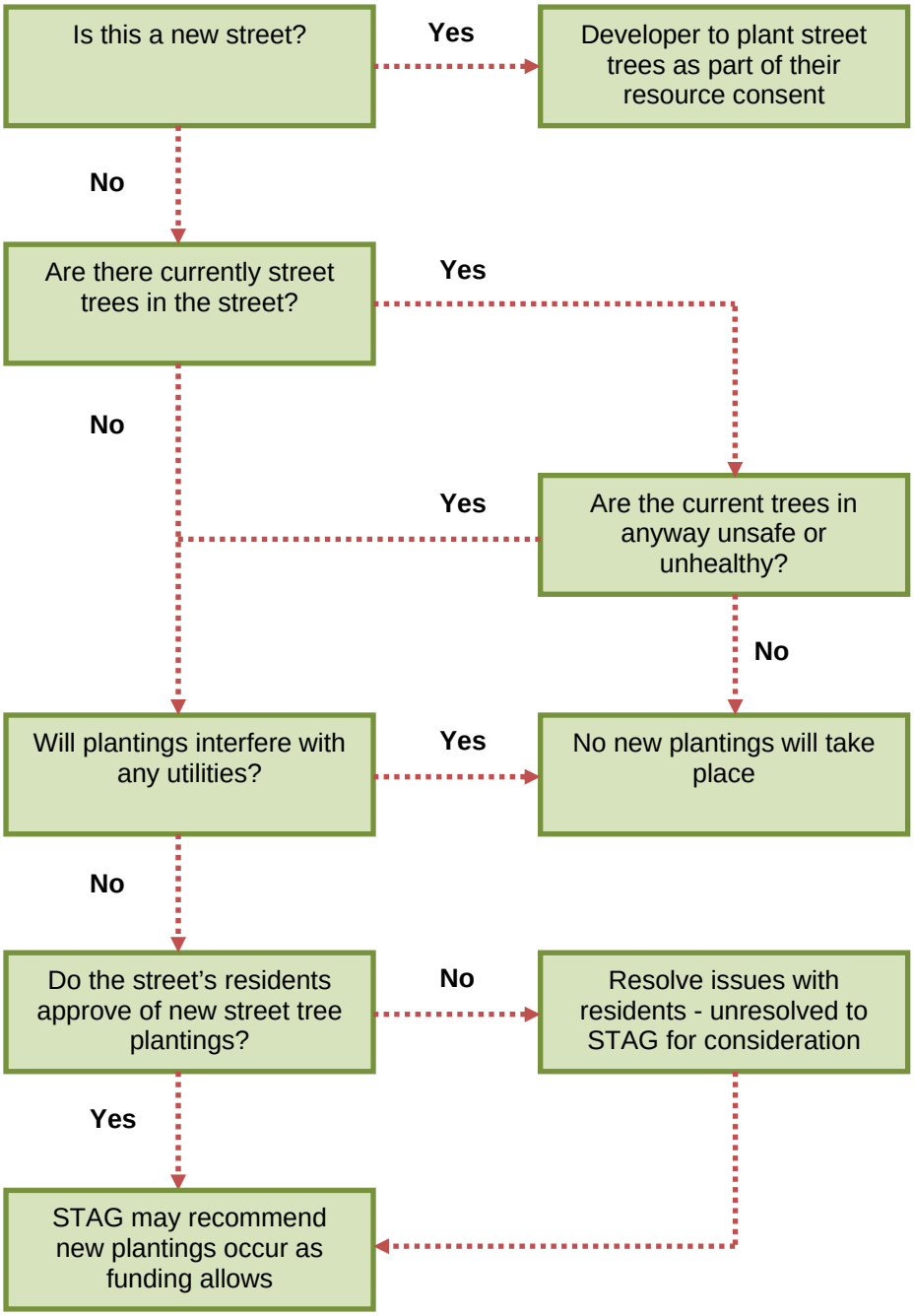
Policy 5.5.1

To inform the affected neighbouring property owners when there is to be a change exceeding 50% of the tree population in their street. This will be achieved through:

(a) Sending out letters to residents informing them of planned removals and replacements.
(b) Implementing the Street Selection Process for new street tree plantings
(c) Produce and make available at Council buildings a Street Tree Brochure

Appendix I – Street Tree Selection Criteria

The following process will be used to decide whether or not a street will receive new street tree plantings.



Appendix II – Approved Species

List of suitable street trees species – small 1.5m – 6m

Tree Species	Height/ Spread	Structure	Foliage	Flowers, fruit other interest
Acer sp Maple	H1.5-7m S	Round / Oval	D. Autumn colour purple / red	Smaller compact trees
Albizia julibrissin Silk tree	H5m S	Spreading	Fernery mimosa	Fluffy pink flowers
Amelancheir Canadensis Shad bush	H3m S	Neat / erect	D. Autumn colour red/yellow/orange	White blooms, black berries
Betula nigra River birch	H6m S3-6m	Broad/light canopy	D. Soft green leaf colour	Pink to orange shaggy bark
Calycanthus Spice bush	H2m S	Bushy	D. Glossy oval	Dark red scented flowers
Cercis Canadensis ‘forest pansy’	H4m S	Round	D. Purple heart shaped	Deep pink flowers
Cornus (some)	H4-6m S	Conical	D.	Clusters white / cream flowers
Gleditsia (thornless sp.)	H6m S	Broad	D. Fern like gold / lime	Soft light canopy
Magnolia grandiflora ‘little gem’	H6m S	Columnar	E. Glossy green	Creamy white flowers
Malus (some) Pear	H3-5m S	Erect	D. Green / purple bronze	Fragrant flowers
Michelia yunnanensis	H2-3M S	Bushy	E. Glossy green	Creamy white fragrant flowers
Olea sp. Olive	H5-6m	Columnar	E. Grey/green	Fruit interest
Prunus sp. Flowering cherry	H2-5m S	Varied	D. Autumn colour	Spring blossoms white to red
Sophora tetraptera Kowhai	H6m S	Semi pendulous	E. Pinnate grey/green	Golden yellow flowers
Sorbus cashmiriana Rowans	H3-4m S	Broad	D. Dark green Pinnate	Red branches/fruit
Sorbus aucuparia Rowans	H4-6m S	Broad	D. Autumn colour	Brilliant red fruit autumn

List of suitable street trees species – medium to large 6m +

Tree Species	Height/ Spread	Structure	Foliage	Flowers, fruit other interest
Alectryon excelsus Titoki	H.10m S	Spreading	E. Glossy yellow/green	
Alnus (some) Alders	H 10m S	Semi pendant	D. Dark green glossy	Yellow catkins
Carpinus Hornbeam	H 8m S	Pyramidal	D. Neatly veined/small	Autumn colour
Ginkgo Biloba 'Autumn Gold' Maiden hair tree	H 8m S	Conical	D. Fern like	Brilliant gold autumn colour
Lagerstromeria indica Crape Myrtle	H 8m	Round	D. small oval	Frilly pink/deep read flowers
Knightia excelsa Rewarewa	H 8m S	Tall upright	E. Narrow toothed	Red flowers (unpleasant scent)
Melia azedarch	H 6m	Spreading	D. fern like	Scented lilac flowers
Platanus Plane	H 6-15m S	Narrow/round	D. Palmate maple like	Trunk interest
Tilla cordata Lime	H 12m S	Pyramidal	D. Round heart shaped	Creamy yellow flowers
Zelkova serrata	H 12m S	Spreading	D. Mid green, serrated	Yellow/rusty brown autumn colour

Appendix III – Legislation and Policy Framework

The following documents and processes have been considered in the preparation of this street tree policy.

Electricity (Hazards from Trees) Regulations 2003
The purpose of this document is to protect the security of the supply of electricity, and safety of the public by:

Prescribing distances from electrical conductors within which trees must not encroach; and
Setting rules about who has responsibility for cutting or trimming trees that encroach on electrical conductors; and
Assign liability if those rules are breached; and
Providing an arbitration system to resolve disputes between works owners and tree owners about the operation of these regulations.

NZS 4404; 2004
This standard serves as a basis for technical compliance for the subdivision and development of land where these activities are subject to the Resource Management Act 1991. This includes the planting of new street trees.

Parks and Reserves Maintenance Contract
This document provides all relevant information required to maintain district Reserves to the required standards.

Masterton
District
Council

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SPECIES LOCATION MAP

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