



BEFORE Upper Hutt City Council

Under the Resource Management Act 1991

and

In the matter of Upper Hutt District Plan Change 41 – Urban Tree Groups

Date 27 June 2016

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE BY DR JAMIE STEER ON BEHALF OF THE SUBMISSION MADE BY GREATER WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL

Introduction

My name is Dr Jamie Steer. I am a Senior Biodiversity Advisor for Greater Wellington Regional Council. I have been employed by Greater Wellington Regional Council in this capacity since 2014.

I have a Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Science from the University of Auckland. I also have a Master of Science in Ecology and Biodiversity, a Bachelor of Science in Biology, and Bachelor of Commerce and Administration in Economic History and Commercial Law from Victoria University of Wellington. I am a former member of the Ecological Society of New Zealand and Birds New Zealand and a current Associate of the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies.

I have extensive professional experience in the fields of ecology, biodiversity, and resource management in New Zealand. Prior to 2014 I worked for six and a half years as an Ecologist/Senior Ecologist for Boffa Miskell, specialising in birds. Before that I held part time roles for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Boffa Miskell, the QEII National Trust, Victoria University of Wellington, and Seafood New Zealand.

1. Scope of evidence and Greater Wellington Regional Council's submission

- 1.1.1 The following evidence relates to a submission from Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) on 26 February, 2016 on Plan Change 41 (Urban Tree Groups) of the Upper Hutt District Plan.
- 1.1.2 GWRC's submission assessed the Plan Change for consistency with the Regional Policy Statement for the Wellington Region (2013) (RPS). The

assessment focussed on how the Plan Change will support and contribute to achieving the sustainable management of natural and physical resources in the Wellington region.

1.1.3 The purpose of this evidence is to provide responses to the recommendations in the Officer's Report.

1.1.4 My evidence today will:

- (a) outline the policy and strategic context of this evidence,
- (b) summarise GWRC's submission,
- (c) respond to the Officer's Report recommendations on the matters covered in GWRC's submission, and
- (d) request decisions on the Plan Change.

2. Policy and strategic context

2.1.1 The RPS is a regional document that identifies significant resource management issues within the region and sets out the objectives, policies, and methods to achieve the integrated management of natural and physical resources for the Wellington region.

2.1.2 The RPS sets out objectives and policies that provide local authorities with direction and guidance on resource management issues that must be given effect to when making changes to district and regional plans (in accordance with section 75 of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA), policies 1-34).

2.1.3 The RPS also provides direction on policies that must be considered as part of resource consent applications (RMA, policies 35-60).

3. Summary of submission

3.1.1 GWRC made a submission largely in support of the Plan Change, highlighting that it recognised the ecological values of trees in the urban environment which is consistent with Policy 47 of the RPS.

3.1.2 The submission supported the systematic approach to identifying Urban Tree Groups for protection identified in the Plan Change's tree protection methodology.

3.1.3 GWRC's submission made comments and sought amendments to the Plan Change directed at achieving even better outcomes for biodiversity in the district of Upper Hutt.

3.1.4 The submission also asked that UHCC consider the use of non-regulatory methods to protect the values of urban trees alongside the regulatory mechanism of the Plan Change.

4. Response to the Officer's Report recommendations

4.1 Policy 12.4.16

- 4.1.1 GWRC supported Policy 12.4.16 but asked that the terms 'pest tree species' and 'wilding tree species' be clarified in the Definitions section of the District Plan.
- 4.1.2 I support the recommendation in the Officer's Report which is to insert a definition for 'pest species of plant' into the Definitions section of the District Plan and ask that the recommendation be accepted.
- 4.1.3 GWRC considers that this amendment will help to reduce ambiguity over what constitutes a pest plant species in Upper Hutt.

4.2 Section 27A.13

- 4.2.1 GWRC considered that a minor change should be made to the matters for consideration when an Urban Tree Group is affected under Section 27A.13 of the District Plan.
- 4.2.2 I support the recommendation in the Officer's Report which is to accept GWRC's suggested change to the mitigation planting consideration in order to broaden its scope and ask that the recommendation be accepted.
- 4.2.3 GWRC consider that this amendment will broaden the scope of considerations to ensure that any proposed mitigation planting compensates for the full range of values that are lost.

4.3 Section 27A.15

- 4.3.1 GWRC considered that a minor change should be made to the schedule in Section 27A.15 to ensure that all the criteria for determining high ecology values are recognised.
- 4.3.2 The Officer's Report notes that this submission point was addressed in paragraph 6.6 in the Statement of Evidence of Ms Tessa Roberts.
- 4.3.3 The explanation provided by Ms Roberts helpfully clarifies that all criteria for Tree Groups scoring high for ecology values were noted in the schedule but that this may not be immediately obvious because only one of the criteria 'canopy representativeness' usually scored highly.
- 4.3.4 I support the recommendation in the Officer's Report which is to reject GWRC's suggested amendment.

5. Decisions requested

- 5.1.1 I request that UHCC notes GWRC's support for the Officer's Report recommendations related to District Plan Change 41.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Steer', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dr Jamie Steer