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July 30, 2018

RE: LUC-2018-367 Application to remove significant tree T442

Lucy Collins
Planner, City Planning
Dunedin City Council
P O Box 5045,
Dunedin 9058

Dear Lucy,

As per your July 10, email request, I have conducted a site visit to number 27 Falkland Street Dunedin, to inspect significant tree T442 listed on Schedule 25.3 as a Cedar (*Cedrus sp.*). The purpose of the visit was to assess the condition of the tree, specifically in relation Application LUC-2018-367 [to remove a significant tree T442 - Cedar].

T442 is a *Cedrus deodara*, commonly called a Himalayan cedar. I have visited the site twice, once on July 13 with yourself and Luke McKinlay (Dunedin City Council) and again on July 18 to undertake measurements of the tree.

My report is as follows.

Site Address: 27 Falkland Street Dunedin 9010 [Property No: 5016576]
Client: Lucy Collins, City Planning. Dunedin City Council
The Proposal: Assess tree T442 in relation Application LUC-2018-367
Assessment date: July 13, 2018

1 Arboricultural condition assessment and observations

- 1.1 The tree was visually inspected from ground level on the morning of July 13, 2018. The inspection took place from outside the property and the weather was clear and calm at the time of the visit.
- 1.2 In general, at the time of the assessment, the tree looked to be in good health and have vitality within the normal range for the species and age.
- 1.3 The tree was approximately 22 metres tall with a trunk diameter at breast height (DBH, 1.4 metres) of approximately 1.1 metres
- 1.4 The tree had a relatively symmetrical canopy and was branched evenly from about 3.5 metres [image one]
- 1.5 Overall, the tree appeared free from defects that would suggest imminent failure and the main branch unions appeared sound

- 1.6 The tree was growing approximately 300mm from the inside edge of front boundary fence and approximately 400mm from the edge of a concrete path leading into the property [image two]
 - 1.7 The tree sat approximately 700mm above the surface of the footpath, with the front boundary fence effectively acting as a retaining wall for the soil inside the property at that point.
 - 1.8 The front boundary fence / retaining wall was leaning at about 15 degrees from the vertical (away from the tree, out towards/over the footpath) [image three]
 - 1.9 Sections of the front boundary fence / retaining wall were cracked and appeared to be partially disconnected
- 2 Arboricultural comment in relation to proposed activity as detailed in planning application LUC-2018-367

I am in support of the application to remove the tree, but there are some concerning points raised in this application that I believe need to be addressed so the finding of this application does not create a precedent for future applications of trees in similar situations.

These are as follows:

- 2.1 The applicant notes that; *In order to repair the wall the tree needs to be removed.*
 - 2.1.1 To repair and replace the wall with the same materials and same dimensions (i.e. to replace it like-for-like), the tree will need to be removed. I accept the comment, but it would be possible to replace the wall with a with a different construction (i.e. a pier and beam foundation holding a floating wall) and not remove the tree
- 2.2 The applicant's attached structural engineers report signed by Bruce Chisholm, of Hanlon & Partners Ltd, Consulting Structural Engineers – 2 July 2018. Re: 27 Falkland St, Dunedin Tree [Job No.17909], concludes that the; *"The only long term solution to provide permanent and safe access to your property is to have the tree removed"*
 - 2.2.1 There are several other solutions that could provide permanent and safe access into the property that does not involve removing the tree. These include moving the access point into the property, reconfiguring how the retaining wall is constructed. Reconfiguring the construction and surface materials of the access path. The tree could even be moved further into the property – I do not believe that this is a financially realistic option, but it is possible, therefore I object to statement put forward by Bruce Chisholm that the *"only long term solution... is to have the tree removed"*
- 2.3 The applicant notes that; *The tree does not contribute aesthetically or functionally to the neighbourhood*
 - 2.3.1 This is personal opinion, which is not supported with documentary evidence or made in keeping with requirements and/or definitions outlined in the Resource Management Act (RMA)
 - 2.3.2 The same can be said for the applicant's second point; *that the tree is not in keeping with the surroundings.* Again, this is personal opinion; the tree is completely age appropriate for the surroundings, the species reflects the landscaping and botanical selection that would have been used when the neighbourhood was built.

- 2.4 The applicant notes that; *It [the tree] is also a hazard to the public*
- 2.4.1 I am a qualified tree risk assessor, approved in two internationally recognised tree risk assessment methodologies; Tree Risk Assessment Qualification (USA) and the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment (UK). The risk posed by T442 to the public would be considered Low As Reasonably Practicable
- 2.5 The applicant notes that; *'Of most concern... is that it has caused our retaining wall to lean over' the public footpath...'*
- 2.5.1 This is a factual statement
- 2.6 The applicant then notes that; *'... the root system has also cracked our private path to the house'*
- 2.6.1 There is a high probability that this [the path being cracked by the tree's roots] is the case, although there is no documentary evidence to support this. It is also worth pointing out that there is a good chance that construction of the path has encouraged localised surface rooting and therefore if the path was constructed differently this issue may not exist.
- 2.7 The applicant notes that; *Due to its size the tree cannot be relocated nor mitigated against*
- 2.7.1 Trees of that size and larger have been and can be successfully moved, therefore to say the tree cannot be relocated is incorrect
- 2.7.2 I relation the statement that the tree cannot [be] mitigated against again is incorrect.
- 2.7.2.1 If, applicant's comment relates to the pine needles and pine cones that continuously fall onto the public footpath, then clearly these can be mitigated against because there were no pine needles and cones on the footpath at the time of my site visit.
- 2.7.2.2 If the applicant is referring to mitigation in the context of writing an Assessment of Environment Effects (AEE), then they have not offered any mitigation options; i.e. they have not provided any options to offset (mitigate) the effect that their proposed action will have on the environment

3 Summary

- 3.1 As noted at the start of section 2, I am in support of the application to remove the tree
- 3.2 Many of the points raised in application LUC-2018-367 are non-supported and in my opinion appear to be personal opinion
- 3.3 The comment that the tree is hazardous is opinion based, not supported by any formal risk undertaking or expert opinion
- 3.4 In my opinion, the applicant has not provided an Assessment of Environment Effects (AEE) as described in and required by the Resource Management Act (RMA)
- 3.5 The applicant has not provided any information as to how they intend to remedy and/or mitigate the visual effects and/or the changes in street character as a result of the proposed tree removal

4 Conclusion and recommendations

- 4.1 I recommend that the council approve application LUC-2018-367 and allow the applicant to remove significant tree T442 listed on Schedule 25.3 as a Cedar (*Cedrus sp.*).
- 4.2 I recommend that the applicant mitigates the visual effects (to their property) as a result of the proposed tree removal by planting at least two 'size appropriate' trees on their property that reflect the period botanical selection that would have been used when the neighbourhood was built; i.e. Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) or Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) or a strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) or similar.
- 4.3 I recommend that the applicant mitigates the changes in street character as a result of the proposed tree removal by supplying two Himalayan cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) to the Dunedin City Council to be planted on Council land in the nearby surrounding area.
- 4.4 I recommend that all trees that are planted and/or provided to the Council to mitigate the remove significant tree T442 are supplied from a commercial nursery and are growing in at least a 50-liter grow bag at the time of planting

As per your request, I have provided a relatively concise report. If you require an explanation of any of the recommendations provided, or documentary evidence to support any of the content in this report please do not hesitate to ask.

Comments in relation to the condition of this tree only considered known targets and visible or detectable tree conditions at the time of the inspection.

Yours sincerely



Mark Roberts
Roberts Consulting Ltd



Image one: Image showing the relatively symmetrical canopy and branch habit of T442



Image two: Google Maps image showing approximate location of T442 in relation to the front boundary of number 27 Falkland Street



Image three: Image showing the front boundary fence / retaining wall at number 27 Falkland Street leaning out towards the footpath

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