

To: The Tree Consultancy Company

Date: 30 October 2020

Attention: Sean McBride

Job No: 63837

Copy to:

Western Springs Pines – review of additional information

Thank you for the extra information you sent through today. I have read through all the information including the Chris Benton arboriculture reports, however I have specifically addressed the ecological document.

With regard to the Simon Chapman memo dated 24 July 2019 I note the following:

- Mr Chapman concurs with the findings of the Wildlands report, and the Boffa Miskell review, that the ecological values of the site are Moderate. This is in line with how I assessed them based on the 2016 Wildlands report.
- Mr Chapman considers the proposed bat mitigation (i.e. a survey prior to felling) not best practice, rather a Vegetation Removal Protocol should be developed. I still stand by my comments in my report that bats are highly unlikely to be present in the area due to the lack of other suitable vegetation in the area, and the closest known population being located approximately 10km away. While they do have large ranges, I believe it would be highly unlikely that they would stray that far from their known locations with very limited other suitable habitat in the vicinity. Without a comprehensive survey under suitable conditions, I believe it is inappropriate to assign higher ecological values based solely on the presence of bats.
- Mr Chapman states the conservation status of kauri and kānuka were erroneously considered to be Not Threatened in the Wildlands Report. I am not sure if he is referring to the 2016 report, or the more recent report that I am aware of but have not read, but the conservation status of both these species as been recently (2018) upgraded from Not Threatened to Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable. For Kauri, as a result of Kauri dieback, and for kānuka as a result of myrtle rust. Assessments undertaken after 2018 should refer to these species as Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable.
- Mr Chapman considers the magnitude of effect will be higher for the total clearance option compared to staged clearance. This is in agreement with my assessment (see the Vegetation row in the table in my report). I have assessed the magnitude of effect of total clearance to be High, while for the other options (staged clearance, selected felling, status quo) to be Moderate to High (final magnitude would depend on the method of clearance ultimately used and how much damage to the understory occurs). The higher magnitude of effect for total clearance is due to the greater shift away from the current state compared to the other methods, i.e. change from completely forested, multiple layered area, to partially forested with mostly only understory and sub canopy species. However, I also note that the large vegetation within the Zoo grounds, trees within the rest of Western Springs Park and areas where pines are not present will remain undisturbed. As these areas are contiguous with the pine area, there will not be a 100% change in the nature of the area.
- An Ecological Management Plan prepared by LASF is referred to. I have not seen this so cannot comment on its appropriateness for ecological restoration of the site.

- With regard to staged removal of the pines, Mr Chapman discusses the value of retaining areas of pine to better simulate natural forest regeneration and buffer against the effects of increased exposure of the understory to wind/rain/desiccation. In theory, yes, it is better to retain patches and undertake the transition over time. However, I question the practicalities of this as I have discussed in my report. Multiple stages mean multiple disturbance events and with access to the site being severely restricted, the potential for disturbance from redeveloping access for each stage is significant. If a method can be developed to remove the pines without requiring heavy machinery access for each stage, then yes, this option is highly worthy of consideration. I do note that staged removal should not leave all trees to rot in situ within the forest. Some rotting wood is good, providing habitat and nutrients, but significant amounts will hinder the establishment of any plantings. I must also note with this point, that the retention of pines for ecological restoration purposes, would still be reliant on the trees being deemed safe to remain. Arboriculture and risk assessments of these trees would still be required, especially of the public are to access the area.
- I also agree with Simon Chapman that the ultimate goal of the project is not clear. Is it to remove the pines for health and safety, increase ecological value, improve access and recreational opportunities? Clarity on this may have improved the ability of experts to develop a management plan.
- I also note that the 1988 Wester Springs Pine Forest Management report prepared by Mr P W Langston recommended the pines be thinned, and underplanted with suitable canopy species (page 19). I am unaware if planting of canopy species has occurred at any stage since this recommendation was made, however I anticipate it if had been, there would be a significant population of canopy species ready to replace the pines as they fall or are felled. It occurs to me that if the underplanting had occurred, and had been properly managed, when it was proposed in 1988, we would not be in the situation we are currently in.

I am happy to review any further information that is made available regarding this project and I am also happy to further explain my reasoning to any local board members prior to them making their decision.

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