

URBAN SUBDIVISIONS – BEAUTIFICATION MEASURES

(Report to Services & Operations Committee – 22 July 1999)

Introduction

Council has considered the extent to which beautification measures will be allowed within urban road reserve areas.

There has been an increasing tendency to include "on street" landscaping and planting in residential subdivisions. Preliminary plans had been received from David Smith Surveying Ltd for the Arborlea Estate subdivision, Crum Bros Ltd for the Pages Road subdivision and Davis Ogilvie & Partners for the Robinson Street (Farm Road) subdivision. David Smith Surveying Ltd proposes to distinguish the Arborlea subdivision as a superior cul de sac, by way of extensive landscaping, planting and the construction of a stone feature entranceway on the road reserve. Crum Bros Ltd proposes to construct a low stone wall between the edge of the footpath and the garden area at the carriageway narrowing on Pages Road, as well as the planting of trees on the grass berm area on the road reserve. Davis Ogilvie and Partners proposes to construct a cobblestone entranceway with associated plantings and seating areas. Copies of the landscaping and planting plans for these three subdivisions are attached.

With the above proposals in mind, it should be noted that an area is designated as a legal road reserve predominantly for the purpose of:

- construction of infrastructure for the safe passage of motorists eg roads
- construction of infrastructure for the safe passage of pedestrians eg footpaths
- construction of infrastructure by utility and service providers eg water, stormwater, sewer, electricity, streetlighting, telecommunications etc.

Construction of other types of infrastructure within these designated areas should not compromise any of the above, and safety of pedestrians and motorists are paramount with any decision made which could affect the road reserve area.

Discussion

Council's existing policy "Fencing and Planting on Road Reserves – 20/09/92" refers:

1. That each applicant be treated on its own merits.
2. That in considering applications for planting trees on the road reserve the prime issue should be the safety of the road user and likely damage to the road.
3. The trees should be planted for the purpose of beautification of the roadside and the benefit of the road user rather than for the material benefit of the adjoining land owner.
4. That land owners be required to register ornamental trees on roadsides with the Council.
5. The Council require indemnity insurance where temporary or permanent fences are erected on the road reserve and/or trees are planted on the road reserve under a licensing system.

This policy does not distinguish between rural or urban areas and as such indeed requires each case to be dealt with on its own merits. The planting of trees within the road reserve in rural areas, would be more difficult to justify against any approvals given for planting of trees in urban areas, predominantly due to:

- Difference in speed limits for rural vs urban.
- Urban tree planting normally addresses the total length of the street and a subsequent "theme", whereas rural tree planting is limited to the immediate adjacent property only.

- District Plan requirements with regard to shading of roads and subsequent ice problems also come into affect.
- Trees in urban areas are mainly on footpath/berm areas with a definite demarcation provided by kerb and channel, whereas in rural areas the trees are in the general berm “run-off” area.

In consideration of allowing the additional construction of “non-essential” infrastructure for pure beautification purposes within the road reserve, Council should note that all these proposed structures will become Council’s vested assets and as such, the subsequent maintenance is an issue. To date, Council has had mixed results with regard to adjacent property owners maintaining garden plots within the road reserve area and Council needs to adopt a consistent approach for the ongoing maintenance of such areas in the future. In some cases Council itself has installed on street plantings in association with various works, in which case Council maintains and develops the plantings.

From an ease of maintenance point of view, it is also sound practise to standardise infrastructure as far as possible in order to eliminate the need for specialist maintenance activities.

In order for Council to adopt a consistent approach to these issues, the following options are available:

- All landscaping and plantings (inclusive of low stone walls as flower bed retainers, flower boxes etc) within urban road reserves, to be approved by Council within its current policy guidelines for trees and that all future maintenance thereof reverts to Council.

or

All landscaping and plantings (inclusive of low stone walls as flower bed retainers, flower boxes etc) within the urban road reserves, to be approved by Council within its current policy guidelines for trees and that all future maintenance thereof reverts to the applicant or property owners.

- That the construction of “non-essential” infrastructure within urban road reserves for pure beautification purposes (high stone wall entranceways) be allowed and that all future maintenance thereof reverts to Council.

or

That the construction of “non-essential” infrastructure within urban road reserves for pure beautification purposes (high stone wall entranceways) be allowed and that all future maintenance thereof reverts to the applicant or adjacent property owners.

or

That the construction of “non-essential” infrastructure within urban road reserves for pure beautification purposes (high stone wall entranceways) **not** be allowed.

In General terms, on street beautification can be accommodated in urban situations subject to guidelines which ensures public safety and safeguards other utilities on the road reserve. However, it is important that the Council takes a consistent approach to such features and the ongoing maintenance, renewal and development of them.

Council supports landscaping and planting (inclusive of low stone walls as flower bed retainers, flower boxes etc) within urban road reserves, as per its current policy guidelines for trees, and that all future maintenance thereof be carried out by Council.

Council supports the construction of “non-essential” infrastructure within urban road reserves for pure beautification purposes (high stone wall entranceways) and that all future maintenance thereof be carried out by Council.

Adopted 22 July 1999

