

Title	Incorporating Natural Areas In Public Open Space And/Or Drainage Areas
Policy Number (Governance Purpose)	LPP 5.2



Policy Type

Local Planning Policy

Policy Purpose

Natural Areas are considered to include wetlands and their buffers and bushland. The District contains many natural areas that have or will be retained as part of a subdivision or development. In the main these natural areas are included in Public Open Space (POS) and/or drainage reserves that will be managed and maintained by the City in the long term.

The Policy should be read in the context of ecologically sustainable development consistent with the principles outlined in the State Wetland Conservation Policy (1997).

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that POS and drainage areas that are to include natural areas are located, designed and developed in accordance with principles which protect and enhance the areas environmental qualities and minimise the City's ongoing management and maintenance requirements.

Policy Statement

The guiding principles for the application of this Policy are:

1. Preservation of conservation values;
2. Promote broader ecological linkages; and
3. Minimise ongoing maintenance costs.

Policy Objectives

- (1) Recognising the important environmental, social, cultural, educational and aesthetic values of the range of natural areas which exist within the district, Council will make every reasonable effort to ensure the conservation, protection and management of all natural areas within the municipality.
- (2) Council will also acknowledge and give consideration to past development impacts on natural areas when considering the impact of future development.
- (3) Ensure that natural areas are adequately assessed and their environmental values determined within the development process.
- (4) Ensure that land development which has the potential to adversely impact on natural areas is able to be adequately and appropriately managed.
- (5) Provide Council and landowners with clear and consistent guidelines for development within areas adjacent to or within the influence of natural areas within the district.

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- (6) Establish procedures and processes for ensuring that natural areas are adequately protected and managed during construction and development.
- (7) Require that development adjacent to wetlands be suitably set back from the wetland boundary to allow for the retention of the wetland dependent vegetation and to maintain its environmental values and functions.

Policy Requirements

- (8) Where development is proposed adjacent to a natural area Management Plan/s must be submitted and approved by Council.
- (9) Where development includes or is adjacent to a wetland, buffers are provided and managed to protect and maintain wetland values. Buffers also act to protect the community from potential impacts such as nuisance midge. The City will apply buffer distances as outlined in Department of Environment and Department of Planning wetland buffer guidelines. A 50m buffer is generally required.
- (10) Where development includes or is adjacent to a wetland an adequate midge buffers must be provided.
- (11) Natural areas and their associated ecological values must be assessed by a suitably qualified environmental specialist and a report provided to council prior to planning or development approval.
- (12) Drainage associated with development and land use is to be managed in line with the following principles:-
 - Discharge of drainage directly into wetlands will not be permitted. Discharge may be acceptable following suitable treatment to remove nutrients and other pollutants, provided that adverse hydrological impacts will not occur.
 - The integrity of wetland and buffer vegetation is to be maintained by design and implementation of best practise Water Sensitive Urban Design Principles particularly where drainage facilities are established within the setback to the wetland.

Design Guidance

- (13) Where natural areas are to be retained or conserved within POS and/or drainage reserves the area should be designed and developed in accordance with the following design requirements;
 1. A site survey is to be undertaken to identify vegetation that are deemed to have significant ecological value. Measures should then be identified to protect and retain vegetation where possible.

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2. To ensure that the integrity of the area is protected and disturbance is minimised, the limit of the natural area shall be determined in consultation with the City and clearly marked on site prior to any works being undertaken and no works including earthworks, clearing or pruning are to be undertaken in these areas without first obtaining approval from the City and other relevant authorities.
3. Where appropriate a Revegetation and Maintenance Management Plan will be submitted for approval by the City prior to any works/construction taking place on the land. The plan should illustrate how and when revegetation works are to occur including weed control and a comprehensive species list. The following key elements should also be reflected in the plan:
 - As a general rule a final revegetation density of 1.6 plants per square metre is to be achieved prior to hand over of maintenance responsibilities to the City. Detailed and agreed completion criteria are to be included in the Revegetation and Maintenance Management Plan.
 - As bond or a bank guarantee for revegetation and maintenance will be required to be lodged with the City. The bond shall be equal to the revegetation and maintenance costs plus 25%.
 - Illustrate how dieback management procedures will be implemented and complied with.
4. To ensure that cut and fill batters around natural management areas can be effectively managed and maintained; slopes shall not be steeper than 1 in 6. Such batters are to be stabilised initially using hydromulch or similar and then by planting with native species.
5. To minimise the potential of weeds and grasses invading natural areas, only clean sand fill shall be used on batter slopes and in adjacent areas. Use of top soil is not acceptable.

To minimise the potential of adjoining grassed areas invading natural management areas, these areas should be defined and separated by a hard edge such as kerbing, walls or paths which shall be constructed as part of subdivision or development of the area. To minimise the potential growth of weeds and grasses in the natural management areas, sprinklers in adjacent irrigated grass and garden areas should, as far as practicable, be positioned to spray away from the natural management area.

6. To minimise the potential for any ongoing physical disturbance, any paths through or around a natural management area should be designed to avoid areas of high vegetation quality and or diversity, not unduly fragment the area and where necessary control indiscriminant movement through such areas by the provision of board walks, fencing, low walls or other appropriate barriers.
7. As a general rule, paths through natural management areas should be in keeping with the natural environment. The location and form of paths is subject

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to approval from the City. Where necessary and appropriate, paths should also function as a fire break and provide fire access.

8. As a general rule the area will be maintained by the developer for a minimum of 2 years. However handover will not occur until such times as the City is satisfied that the relevant completion criteria as outlined in the Revegetation and Management Plan has been met.

Approvals for the subdivision and/or development of land that includes natural areas will contain appropriate conditions which require the application of the above principles.

- (14) Prior to a planning approval, including structure plans, subdivision and development being issued the Council may require the preparation and approval of a fire management plan.

Strategic Link:	Town Planning Scheme No. 3
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