

21.03 ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

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This clause provides local content to support Clause 11 (Settlement), Clause 12 (Environmental and landscape values) and Clause 15 (Built Environment and Heritage) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

Additional local content is also provided in Clause 21.10 to support implementation of both the State and Local Planning Policy Frameworks in a local area context.

21.03-1 A treed city

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The natural environment provides many and varied values and benefits for the local community, including:

- The intrinsic value of biodiversity to support healthy ecosystems.
- Supporting a diversity of organisms and flora and fauna communities within the municipality and within each patch of habitat.
- Practical ecosystem services, such as climate moderation, erosion control, water purification and carbon sequestration.
- Managing environmental risks, minimising impact of urban heat island effects and providing shade.
- Providing landscape character and a green skyline, particularly along ridgelines and creek valleys, along major views and vistas and as a backdrop to urban and rural areas.
- Benefits to the health and wellbeing of the community, including amenity, recreation, social interaction and health benefits and improved liveability.
- Promoting the value of the natural environment to the community, including the need for environmental sustainability as an integral element of the built form.
- Defining and enhancing the character and image of Knox and its local areas and contributing to a sense of place.

The Knox City Plan (incorporating the Council Plan) 2013-17 and Integrated City Strategy and Implementation Plan 2015-17 recognise the role of the natural environment with its many values and benefits, and seek to protect and enhance all natural areas in Knox. Preventing the loss of vegetation and enhancing the green and leafy image of Knox is central to its overall vision, reflecting its healthy, liveable communities and its local identity and character.

Canopy trees are an integral component in retaining Knox's natural environments and maintaining its landscape character. Once canopy trees are lost, they are impossible to replace in the short to medium term. With the loss of canopy trees, local habitat and ecosystems are compromised, and the values and benefits of the natural environment are significantly diminished.

The importance of retaining and enhancing vegetation, in particular canopy tree coverage, as part of the planning application process in the face of competing development pressures is therefore a key objective. All trees, even single canopy trees in suburban backyards, contribute to the green skyline and collectively make a contribution to Knox's green and leafy character and its natural environment.

Key issues:

- Maintaining and strengthening Knox's 'green and leafy' image and its identifiable landscape character, despite development pressures.
- Recognising the importance of retaining canopy trees as the single most important factor in retaining Knox's landscape character and its natural environment.

- Improving overall understanding within the planning system of the value of trees in improving the liveability of Knox's communities, mitigating climate change impacts and providing a range of other health and wellbeing benefits.
- Habitat fragmentation.

Objective 1

To protect and strengthen treed character and landscape value across all areas in Knox.

Strategies

- 1.1 Create a greener and more liveable City with more canopy trees and vegetation in public and private spaces.
- 1.2 Require vegetation to be retained where it contributes to landscape value and character, along ridgelines, waterways, streetscapes, transport corridors, and where it contributes to significant views, vistas and local amenity values.
- 1.3 Ensure new development proposals consider the impact on the health and viability of existing vegetation, and respond to the landscape values of the site and local area.
- 1.4 Incorporate the planting of new vegetation, including canopy trees within development proposals to enhance natural values of the site and of the local area.

21.03-2 Biodiversity and native vegetation

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The Knox community places a high value on the municipality's natural environment and conserving and enhancing remaining natural habitat and biodiversity values.

Knox has many sites of biological significance, including sites of National, State, regional and local significance as identified within the *Sites of Biological Significance in Knox – 2nd Edition, 2010*. These sites contain native vegetation, creeks, water bodies and floodplains, which not only provide attractive and distinctive landscapes, but contain environmentally significant flora and fauna and are at risk of being degraded and lost to development.

Less than 5 per cent of Knox's land area retains native vegetation (not including scattered trees with no understorey). Of this remaining native vegetation, nearly 90 per cent belongs to Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) that are now listed as endangered or vulnerable at the national or bioregional scale. The EVCs which remain are significantly reduced from their original state and are at further risk from inappropriate clearing and fragmentation.

Conservation of native flora in Knox is at a critical stage, and this has grave implications for native fauna in loss of habitat. More than a quarter (and perhaps as much as half) of remaining flora species is estimated to be lost within one or two decades if no preventative action is taken. It is critically important to retain and enhance the remnants of Knox's remaining native vegetation and sites of biological significance. Maintaining the diversity and genetic integrity of indigenous flora and fauna is therefore a priority. Consideration also needs to be given, where appropriate, to responding to the biodiversity needs of a changing climate, to maximise opportunities for survival of indigenous species under climate change.

Biodiversity values are best represented in Knox by the recognised sites of biological significance, and by their indigenous flora, fauna and landscapes. Indigenous flora and fauna outside the recognised sites are also important, and some indigenous fauna are supported by plantings of certain non-indigenous plants.

The intrinsic values of biodiversity across the State are addressed in the application of Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation. In the local context of Knox, implementing native vegetation and biodiversity values also includes the objectives and strategies of this clause, Clause 21.11 Local Areas and relevant schedules to the Environmental Significance Overlay and Vegetation Protection Overlay. Collectively, this local content reflects the context, values and expectations with respect to protecting biodiversity and native vegetation across Knox.

Key issues

- Loss of habitat and loss of biodiversity.
- Protecting and enhancing natural environments and native vegetation for all their natural values, particularly in Sites of Biological Significance.
- Minimising any further reduction in indigenous vegetation that is occurring from land use fragmentation and development pressure.
- Controlling and managing pest plants.

Objective 2

To retain and enhance native vegetation in Knox, in extent and ecological condition.

Strategies

- 2.1 Require land use, development and subdivision to protect and enhance the significance of the natural environment and respond to the environmental and natural values of the local area in an integrated and balanced manner.
- 2.2 Support the retention and enhancement of habitat, ecological and intrinsic values of native vegetation, particularly along creek valleys and linear reserves, in the Dandenong Foothills, parks and reserves and in recognised Sites of Biological Significance.
- 2.3 Ensure that removal or destruction of native vegetation occurs only where it is unavoidable, and then only to the minimum extent necessary.
- 2.4 When native vegetation is lost, compensate the local community and environment through offsets located within Knox.
- 2.5 Incorporate the planting of native vegetation into landscape plans, subject to constraints such as bushfire risk.

Objective 3

To protect and enhance the natural values of Sites of Biological Significance.

Strategies

- 3.1 Protect and enhance Sites of Biological Significance for their natural values, recognising the strategic role these sites play in overall conservation management and achieving biodiversity outcomes in Knox.
- 3.2 Use Sites of Biological Significance as focal points for projects to create and enhance habitat and natural values, such as offset plantings and seed propagation.
- 3.3 Avoid vegetation removal, development or land uses within or near Sites of Biological Significance, that would fragment habitat, weaken habitat linkages, or diminish the extent or quality of native vegetation, aquatic habitats or floodplain processes.
- 3.4 On land adjacent to or upstream of Sites of Biological Significance, foster land management practices that help to buffer or support the Sites' natural values, and discourage adverse impacts such as habitat fragmentation, noise, altered hydrology, increasing the need to remove vegetation for bushfire protection, visual incompatibility and degrading the natural experiences offered by the Sites.

Objective 4

To maintain the diversity and genetic integrity of indigenous flora and fauna within Knox to prevent species from becoming locally extinct.

Strategies

- 4.1 In assessing applications for removal of vegetation and in considering replacement planting:

- Place considerable weight on protecting, managing and planting species whose category of threat of local extinction in Knox is ‘Critically endangered’ or ‘Endangered’.
- Place considerable weight on protection of habitat needed by fauna species that are threatened with extinction at the local or larger scales.
- Avoid planting species or varieties that displace indigenous plants.
- Ensure the provenance of indigenous replacement plants is as close as possible from the planting site (geographically or environmentally).
- Consider adaptive approaches to biodiversity management (where appropriate), to maximise opportunities for indigenous species to adapt to and survive under climate change, in response to new science and recognised industry best-practice.

21.03-3 Natural corridors

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Knox is traversed by a series of small creeks, generally running east to west, whose corridors present opportunities for an important system of public spaces. These corridors include drainage easements, floodways, parks and other public reserves. Because of the large areas involved and their relatively uninterrupted extent through the municipality, these spaces have the potential to contribute significantly to Knox’s landscape and recreation resources. These corridors present opportunities to create highly valued and amenable open space networks of walking and cycling paths, public spaces, landscape and ecological corridors. There is further scope for improved urban design outcomes to activate the natural corridors and improve the interface and connectivity between public and private spaces.

Key issues

- Recognising the multi-faceted role of creek corridors as important environmental, recreation, open space and landscape corridors throughout the City.
- Improving access to and connectivity to creek reserves.
- Improving urban design outcomes along creek reserves.
- Potential bushfire risk associated with natural corridors.

Objective 5

To protect and enhance the network of habitat and creek corridors, as key public, landscape and environmental assets.

Strategies

- 5.1 Develop and enhance the creek corridor system as a network of paths, public open space, and natural systems with a sense of address.
- 5.2 Support an improved network of habitat corridors and waterways to connect sites of biological significance and other areas of indigenous vegetation.
- 5.3 Support interaction of public and private realms along creek corridors and waterways.
- 5.4 Support and strengthen opportunities for creek corridors being actively used as public spaces, with high levels of connectivity from nearby urban areas, enhancing their role as places for social, recreational, cultural and community activities.
- 5.5 Manage bushfire risks of natural corridors and adjoining land.

21.03-4 Significant landscapes

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The most significant landscape characteristic of Knox is its appearance as a suburban area set in a larger natural and rural landscape. Rural and green wedge land in Knox contributes

to its significant landscapes which play an important role in shaping the overall identity and character of the municipality. This land is predominantly located in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges, including the Lysterfield Valley. This land is significant at the metropolitan, regional and local levels. It forms part of two regional 'green wedges': the *Yarra Valley and Yarra and Dandenong Ranges* to the north east, and the *Southern Ranges* to the south east. The residential areas located within the Dandenong Foothills also contribute to the significance of this landscape.

Views of the Dandenong Ranges and their foothills are valued highly by the Knox community. The Dandenong Ranges and their foothills also form a backdrop to countless views from across the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, including long range views to and from the Melbourne CBD.

The Lysterfield Valley is classified by the National Trust as "an attractive pastoral landscape which forms part of a 'green wedge' between the suburban areas of Rowville and Dandenong North, and the urbanised Ferntree Gully-Belgrave ridge of the Dandenongs".

The Dandenong Valley Parklands are a series of regionally significant reserves extending 10 kilometres along the Dandenong Creek. A large area of the Parklands are within Knox, with EastLink situated along the eastern edge of the Parklands between the creek and residential areas. It is one of the most highly visited and popular parks in Melbourne.

There are other parcels of land outside these three areas with a current or former rural land use or rural zoning that require further investigation to determine their future role in the broader context of rural and green wedge land in Knox.

The eastern side of Knox forms an important edge and buffer to Melbourne's expanding suburbs. It is here that the built form of the suburbs meets the vegetated hillsides of the Dandenong Ranges, stopping among the folds of the Lysterfield Valley. This edge includes both public land (such as the Dandenong Ranges and Churchill National Parks) and private land, with the Urban Growth Boundary assisting in maintaining the urban edge. The Dandenong Valley Parklands provide a similar edge and landscape buffer to suburban development to the west of the municipality.

Key issues

- Maintaining the unique landscape character, amenity and natural values of Knox's significant landscapes, including the Dandenong Foothills, Lysterfield Valley and the Dandenong Creek Valley, despite development pressures and managing bushfire risk.
- The impact of new development on the landscape character of rural and green wedge land.
- Fragmentation of land.
- Lack of current information about the productivity (including potential food production) and economic role of agricultural land in Knox.
- Lack of current strategic directions for rural and green wedge land that consider all of its existing and potential values.
- The opportunity in the Dandenong Valley Parklands to consolidate the many disjointed component parklands and reserves since the construction of EastLink.

Objective 6

To protect and enhance the role of Knox's significant landscapes.

Strategies

- 6.1 Maintain an urban edge that reflects the significance, on a metropolitan level, of the Dandenong Foothills, rural valleys, and natural landscapes along the eastern and western edges of Knox.
- 6.2 Protect and enhance the views of the Dandenong Foothills as vegetated hillsides.
- 6.3 Protect and enhance the views of the Lysterfield Valley as a pastoral landscape.

- 6.4 Protect the rural views along the floodplain of the Dandenong Creek that identify the remnant grazing and horticultural landscapes that once separated Melbourne from the Dandenong Ranges.
- 6.5 Protect and enhance the landscape quality and role of the Dandenong Creek Valley as a wide, green pastoral break separating Knox from the suburban character of the balance of the eastern suburbs of Melbourne.
- 6.6 Limit development within the Dandenong Foothills, Lysterfield Valley and Dandenong Creek Valley that may compromise their landscape and environmental significance.

Objective 7

To protect existing and potential aesthetic, biodiversity, landscape, amenity, cultural and agricultural values of rural and green wedge land.

Strategies

- 7.1 Limit urban development in rural and green wedge land.
- 7.2 Support the consolidation, and avoid further fragmentation of lots.
- 7.3 Support the non-urban values of rural and green wedge land by:
 - Retaining existing agricultural uses in rural and green wedge land.
 - Avoiding non-agricultural land uses that would adversely affect the operation of existing and/or future agricultural activities.
- 7.4 Ensure that new use and development protects and complements the established landscape character and scenic qualities of rural and green wedge land.
- 7.5 Minimise the visual dominance of development in:
 - Rural and green wedge land.
 - Along the Dandenong Creek Valley.

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Implementation

Policy guidelines

- Apply Clause 22.01 (Advertising Signs local policy) to applications for the display of advertising signs on Bush Boulevards to protect significant landscapes.
- Apply Clause 22.02 (Industrial and Restricted Retail Sales Areas Design local policy) to land in an Industrial 1 Zone or Commercial 2 Zone to ensure development provides high quality landscaping and visual amenity in industrial and restricted retail areas.
- Apply Clause 22.04 (Environmentally Sustainable Development local policy) to relevant development applications to facilitate more sustainable landscapes and natural habitats.
- Apply Clause 22.07 (Development in Residential Areas and Neighbourhood Character local policy) to facilitate residential development that contributes to the strong 'green and leafy' character of Knox.
- Apply Clause 22.08 (Scoresby-Rowville Employment Precinct local policy) to land within the high amenity employment precinct to ensure development responds positively to existing environmental and landscape features.
- Request applications for use or development in or adjoining parks and waterways to provide information on whether the proposal would impact vegetation, air, water and soil quality of the park or waterway, as appropriate.

Application of zones and overlays

- In and adjacent to Sites of Biological Significance, avoid zoning changes that would conflict with the Sites' environmental and landscape values.

- Apply the Neighbourhood Residential Zone – Schedule 1 to the Dandenong Foothills area to ensure development protects and enhances Knox's distinctive environmental and biological values.
- Apply the Public Conservation and Resource Zone to public conservation and recreation areas.
- Apply the Public Park and Recreation Zone to public open space areas.
- Apply the Environmental Significance Overlay to Sites of Biological Significance, significant indigenous remnant vegetation and the Dandenong Ranges buffer area to protect areas of environmental significance.
- Apply the Vegetation Protection Overlay to areas of significant remnant overstorey vegetation, significant exotic and non-indigenous native trees and areas with significant canopy trees for protection.
- Apply the Significant Landscape Overlay and the Design and Development Overlay to land in the Dandenong Foothills and Lysterfield Valley to ensure development and vegetation removal respects the environmental and landscape significance of the area.
- Apply the Design and Development Overlay and the Development Plan Overlay to protect natural values where required, as part of the desired built form outcomes.

Further strategic work

- Review the application of overlays to ensure all significant vegetation is afforded appropriate protection.
- Investigate further opportunities to take into account the local values of vegetation, including amenity and health and wellbeing values, in considering applications for vegetation removal.
- Complete an assessment of agricultural land in rural and green wedge areas to better understand its productivity (including potential food production) and economy.
- Complete an assessment of and provide strategic directions for all rural and green wedge land that consider its aesthetic, biodiversity, landscape, amenity, cultural and agricultural values.
- Work with State Government agencies and neighbouring municipalities to strategically plan for, consolidate and improve the recreational activities and landscape characteristics of the Dandenong Valley parklands, and to address interface issues between parkland and urban development.
- Review planning strategies and zoning in the area surrounding the Dandenong Valley Parklands to ensure consistency with objectives for development of the park.
- In partnership with Melbourne Water, develop a masterplan for Lewis Park and the Blind Creeek Corridor.

Reference documents

Dandenong Foothills Urban and Landscape Review, Hansen Partnership Pty Ltd for Knox City Council, 2006

Dandenong Valley Parkland Future Directions Plan, Parks Victoria, 2006

Genetic Integrity Policy, Knox City Council, 2015

Integrated City Strategy and Implementation Plan 2015-17, Knox City Council, 2015 (or as amended)

Knox Central Structure Plan, Knox City Council, October 2017

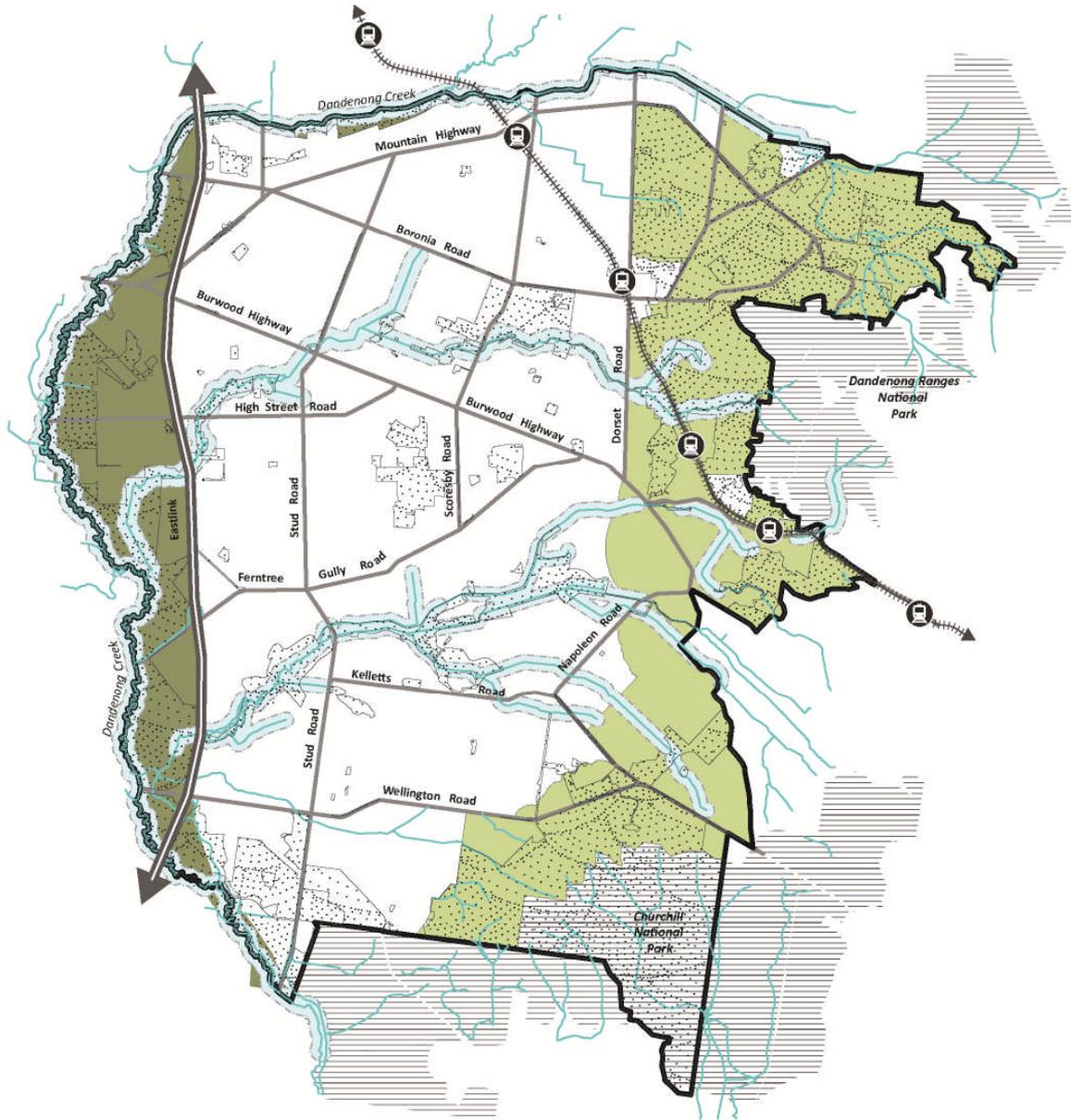
Knox City Plan (incorporating the Council Plan) 2013-17, Knox City Council, 2013 (or as amended)

Knox Urban Design Framework 2020, Planisphere, 2003

National Trust Register No. 355 – Lysterfield Valley and Yarra Ranges Landscape

Sites of Biological Significance in Knox - 2nd Edition, G.S. Lorimer, 2010

Figure 1: Environmental and Landscape Values Map



LEGEND

-  MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY
-  RAIL CORRIDOR/TRAIN STATION
-  DECLARED ARTERIAL ROAD
-  EASTLINK
-  NATIONAL PARK
-  PRIMARY NATURAL CORRIDOR
-  DANDENONG CREEK VALLEY
-  CREEK
-  SITES OF BIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE
-  DANDENONG FOOTHILLS (INCLUDES Lysterfield Valley)

Not to scale 