

21.07 ENVIRONMENTAL RISK

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The City of Whittlesea is characterised by its expanding urban areas and urban-rural fringe, with well over half of the municipality being rural. Rural areas support various farming enterprises, lifestyle properties, water supply catchments, extractive industry, conservation areas and tourist attractions.

Historically poor land management activities have contributed to land degradation and as a result increased environmental risks. Key areas contributing to land management issues include:

- the removal of native vegetation, increased salinity and soil erosion impacts, particularly around local waterways,
- bushfires impacts,
- weeds and animal pests spreading and impacting on native vegetation and farm pastures,
- climate change impacts,
- overstocking resulting soil in compaction, erosion and run-off, dry-land salinity, loss of vegetation, loss of soil moisture and carbon and reduced water quality, and
- urban development pressures on rural land, and illegal vegetation removal, rock removal, or land filling.

Council aims to maintain and improve rural land health and minimise environmental risk.

21.07-1 Floodplains

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No Content

21.07-2 Erosion and Landslip

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No Content

21.07-3 Salinity

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No Content

21.07-4 Bushfire

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Bushfires and grassfires have significant social, economic, and environmental impacts on the City of Whittlesea and its residents. Council's aim is to strengthen community resilience to bushfire and ensure that fire risks are carefully considered throughout the planning and development process.

The *Regional Bushfire Planning Assessment* (Melbourne Metropolitan Region, 2012) outlines that bushfire hazard is high in the northern rural reaches of the municipality in addition to areas along the Plenty River adjacent to established and emerging residential estates. This hazard is due to the nature and extent of vegetation, topography, settlement patterns and road access arrangements.

Grassland areas also present a fire hazard, particularly at the urban-grassland interface of existing settlements. Residential areas that are bordered by non-urban edges including conservation areas, cleared agricultural land and open space where new development is expected to occur are at a higher risk of grassfire that can spread rapidly and put lives and property in danger.

Objective 1 To ensure that strategic and settlement planning decisions prioritise the protection of human life.

Strategy 1.1 Direct growth to areas of lower bushfire risk having regard to the municipal and local context.

- Strategy 1.2 Avoid locations where bushfire risk cannot be reduced to an acceptable level.
- Objective 2 To reduce the impact of bushfire risk.**
- Strategy 2.1 Ensure that decision-making considers issues of strategic and settlement planning as a primary consideration, followed by precinct and lot level responses.
- Strategy 2.2 Consider alternate options for development in areas where required bushfire protection measures may be incompatible with environmental and cultural heritage objectives.

21.07-5 Environmental Degradation

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Urban development, agricultural activities, land use change and development and poor land management practices can lead to:

- Soil erosion and deposition
- Soil degradation- increased salinity and loss of soil structure
- Ecosystem change
- Degradation, loss of native vegetation, loss of biodiversity
- Soil contamination.

These activities can lead to diminished land productivity and a reduced capacity of the land to maintain important ecosystem services.

Objective 1: To maintain and improve rural land health and productivity

- Strategy 1.1 Encourage sustainable land management including managing livestock, weed and animal pests, retention of native vegetation.
- Strategy 1.2 Mitigate against salinity and soil erosion caused by vegetation removal, rock removal, overgrazing or land filling.

21.07-6 Implementation

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Apply the Bushfire Management Policy (Clause 22.03) to planning permit applications in bushfire prone areas to minimise the community's exposure to bushfire risk.

Reference Documents

- Australian Standard AS 3959: 2011, Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas
- Municipal Fire Management Plan (City of Whittlesea, as amended from time to time).
- CFA preferred requirements: Water supplies and access for subdivisions in Residential 1 and 2 and Township Zones (2006).
- CFA preferred requirements: Water supplies and access for subdivisions in Rural Zones (2006).
- Clause 22.03 Bushfire Management Local Planning Policy
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2012-2022
- Green Wedge Management Plan 2011-2021
- Regional Bushfire Planning Assessment – Metropolitan Melbourne Region (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2012).