

22.03 BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY

24/05/2018
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This policy applies to all land in the municipality within a designated Bushfire Prone Area as outlined in the *Building Regulations 2006*, which is not already covered by a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO).

22.03-1 Policy Basis

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Bushfires and grassfires have significant social, economic and environmental impacts on the City of Whittlesea and its residents. This policy seeks to strengthen the community's resilience to bushfire and grassfire and ensure that fire risks are carefully considered in the planning and development process.

Areas in the municipality of high-to-extreme bushfire risk have been mapped and are covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO). However, fire hazard in the municipality is not limited to areas of extreme bushfire hazard as mapped by the BMO, and areas of medium-to-high fire hazard are more prevalent throughout the municipality. These areas are identified in the State-wide designated Bushfire Prone Area (BPA) map as outlined in the *Building Regulations 2006*.

In particular, the City of Whittlesea has extensive undeveloped areas located at the urban/rural 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.

Where new residential subdivision is proposed, particular attention to fire issues is required in the design of subdivisions, the siting and design of buildings, and the management of land in areas that are not covered by a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO).

Decision-making around fire risk will consider strategic and settlement planning as a primary consideration followed by precinct, neighbourhood and site level responses.

22.03-2 Objectives

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- To give effect to the relevant objectives and strategies of Clause 13.05 (Bushfire) over all land identified as being at risk of bushfire.
- To ensure that land use planning and developments are informed by a broad consideration of bushfire.
- To avoid intensifying bushfire risk to life and property through inappropriately located and designed development.
- To ensure that appropriate protection measures are in place prior to any development proceeding in areas outside the BMO.
- To strengthen community resilience to bushfire by ensuring that bushfire and grassfire protection measures are considered and given effect to in large and/or isolated subdivisions outside the BMO.
- To ensure that the threat of grassfire in interface areas is considered at a precinct, sub-precinct, and street level through the provision of appropriate fire breaks and road network arrangements.
- To ensure the protection of environmental and cultural values from bushfire and grassfire risks.

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Strategic and Settlement Planning

When undertaking strategic land use planning for settlement, and in considering any planning scheme amendment or preparing a Precinct Structure Plan or Development Plan or the like, it is policy to:

- Ensure that the views of the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and relevant publications (as outlined in Clause 13.05) are taken into account in decision-making.
- Direct settlement away from areas where bushfire management outcomes would be to the detriment of environmental and cultural heritage assets.
- Consider the views of the Municipal Fire Management Committee as outlined in the *City of Whittlesea Municipal Fire Management Plan* on potential risks to human life, followed by the potential risks to critical infrastructure, property, economic assets, environmental and cultural values, and the ongoing resources which will be necessary to maintain those activities in conjunction with the ongoing use of land. Require that potentially vulnerable development outside of the Bushfire Management Overlay:
 - Considers the fire risk at a local level.
 - Requires developments to incorporate bushfire mitigation measures through the appropriate siting, landscaping and layout of new development to enhance resilience.

Subdivisions

It is policy to:

- Ensure that the subdivision of land outside the Bushfire Management Overlay into 10 or more lots:
 - Considers the need for multiple points of access and egress to the existing and proposed road network.
 - Considers the need for perimeter roads and hard-edges at the urban-hazard interface (including grassland).
 - Requires adequate access and egress opportunities for early residents, construction workers and emergency vehicles in emergent developments.
 - Implements an appropriate fire break (buffer) between grassland and the lot boundary of the residential development to meet the Australian Standard (AS3959: 2011 or as amended), unless a reduced fire break has been determined by a fire management plan approved by the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer, to the satisfaction of the responsible authority. The fire break includes the widths of hard surfaces such as perimeter roads, footpaths, nature strips (non-vegetated) in addition to any closely managed grasslands or vegetation that is under 10cm in length. The fire break should not include land with high ecological values.

22.03-4 Policy guidelines

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Planning decisions should consider:

- The bushfire hazard on the land and in the surrounding landscape and the level of risk it poses to human life, property and community infrastructure.
- Whether necessary bushfire protection measures can be established and maintained in conjunction with the ongoing use of the land, including any mechanisms required to achieve this.
- The impact of bushfire management measures on biodiversity and cultural heritage.
- The layout of subdivisions so as to provide for a clear fire break and to optimise the opportunity for escape from bushfires and access.
- The siting and design of buildings so as to reduce fire risk and damage.
- Consistency with the approach to planning and decision-making in bushfire prone areas, which seeks to prioritise strategic and settlement planning followed by localised site based responses.

- Any relevant approved State, regional and municipal fire prevention plans, Site Management Plan, or Precinct Structure Plan applying to the land.

22.03-5 Reference Documents

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- Australian Standard AS 3959: 2011, *Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas* (as amended from time to time).
- *Bushfire Prone Area Map* determined under the *Building Regulations 2006* (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)*.
- City of Whittlesea, *Municipal Fire Management Plan* (as amended from time to time).
- *Regional Bushfire Planning Assessment – Metropolitan Melbourne Region* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2012).