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C219whse**ENVIRONMENT****Overview**

There are issues of natural environment, visual environment and the built environment which are important to the City of Whitehorse. Several areas in the City have special natural, environmental or historic significance while many open space reserves provide habitats for a diverse range of flora and fauna, as well as a range of both active and passive recreation activities. These areas are not merely places for recreation, but conservation. There is an urgency to put appropriate controls into place to protect natural features, buildings and areas of historical significance to avoid further loss of the City's environmental assets.

Tree preservation and regeneration is vitally important within the City. It strengthens neighbourhood character, strengthens the landscape and amenity, reduces the urban heat island effect, provides habitat for wildlife, improves air quality and the local climate and has positive effects on community health and wellbeing.

Trees are integral to the neighbourhood character of Whitehorse and they have been identified as an important contributor to the Bush Environment, Bush Suburban and Garden Suburban character areas. The Municipal Wide Tree Study identified that *"trees are the most significant determinant of the character of various areas within the City of Whitehorse, with upper tree canopy covering a significant proportion of the city"* (Municipal Wide Tree Study Discussion Paper, March 2016).

Council is concerned that the removal of canopy trees and vegetation will erode the neighbourhood character of Whitehorse. Of particular concern is the clearing of all trees from sites prior to development. Council's interim Urban Forest Strategy published in 2018, outlines the vision, policies and actions relating to Whitehorse's tree population and has set a target for canopy cover of at least 30% by 2030.

The *Whitehorse Sustainability Strategy* is a key document for informing and supporting Council's strategic objectives and commitment to the principles of sustainability. The Strategy includes a list of priority areas for action which are aimed at the City achieving ecological sustainability which is a fundamental principle to be implemented by the land use planning system. Ecological Sustainable Development is "using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased" (National Strategy for Ecological Sustainable Development 1992[NSESD]).

Council has an Environmentally Sustainable Development policy in order to achieve best practice design, construction and operation for new development. This will accelerate Whitehorse's commitment to an environmentally sustainable city.

The City contains many major thoroughfares of metropolitan significance. The visual amenity of these routes is critical in determining the overall sense of identity and character of the City. The City's 'Gateways' require special treatment in recognition of their impact on first impressions and the image that they project of the City. Main thoroughfares and gateways are prime locations for advertising signs. If not appropriately managed, the proliferation of signage can drastically reduce the visual amenity of an area. Council will facilitate adequate identification of businesses but seeks to minimise visual clutter. Many of the City's industrial areas were developed when planning controls were either non-existent or well below today's standards. Many of these areas are of poor amenity and their streetscapes are dominated by the built form, with little or no landscaping. Council wants to ensure that the streetscape is improved by way of street tree planting and landscaping among other things. It is also essential that all new development provide for appropriate landscaping and high quality design to reinforce the regeneration process.

Council wishes to foster the provision and use of information technology throughout the community. The infrastructure required to provide access to such facilities can have a substantial impact on the streetscape and visual amenity of the City if not sensitively managed. In particular, cabling can seriously affect street trees that can, in turn, have a profound impact on the character of an area. Council has a strong preference for the location of communication cables underground,

particularly along major thoroughfares such as Springvale Road, Canterbury Road, Middleborough Road and Whitehorse Road. Greater emphasis on urban design and streetscape appearance has also created an increased awareness and interest in underground power lines.

*Council's **Environment Strategy** is based on the principle that the environmentally sensitive assets of the City will be protected and enhanced.*

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Key issues

- Ecological sustainability.
- Protection of areas of special significance.
- Promotion of vegetation protection and regeneration.
- Promotion of design excellence.
- Heritage protection.
- Visual amenity.
- Underground cabling.
- Streetscape planting.
- Industrial areas.
- Stormwater management.
- Promotion of environmental issues including air, global warming, sustainable transport management and water quality.
- Waste management and litter reduction.
- Climate change.
- Promotion of water and energy conservation.
- Promotion of environmentally sustainable development.

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Objectives

- To protect and enhance areas with special natural, environmental, cultural or historic significance for the future enjoyment of the community.
- To facilitate environmental protection and improvements to known assets including water, flora, fauna and biodiversity assets.
- To develop main thoroughfares as attractive boulevards with improved advertising signage, landscaping and building design.
- To protect and enhance air and water quality.
- To reduce automobile dependency and encourage sustainable transport use.
- To reduce energy and water consumption.
- To protect and enhance the tree canopy cover in residential areas of the municipality.
- To protect and enhance the preferred neighbourhood character and the liveability of residential areas within the municipality.
- To achieve best practice in addressing the principles of environmentally sustainable development.

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Strategies

Strategies to achieve these objectives include:

- Providing controls to protect and enhance areas of environmental significance.

WHITEHORSE PLANNING SCHEME

- Ensuring that tree removal within significant areas requires permission.
- Ensuring that the replanting of tall trees and indigenous vegetation is appropriate to the type of vegetation in the area and enhances and retains biodiversity.
- Encouraging appropriate development that responds to environmental characteristics and infrastructure constraints.
- Ensuring that development along part of Terrara Road remains low density in order to respond to the environmental constraints that exist in this area.
- Identifying those buildings, structures and features of historical significance within the municipality.
- Ensuring development is of a high quality design that is compatible with the character and appearance of the area.
- Providing adequate open space and landscaping for new development.
- Requiring the planting of upper canopy trees and other vegetation that enhances the character of the area.
- Ensure that where applicable, the contribution of land towards any public open space requirements can assist in the protection of sites of environmental value identified as having high conservation significance.
- Encouraging underground cabling and the co-location of siting facilities for service and communication infrastructure, including satellite dishes to minimise visual and amenity impacts.
- Reducing the visual impact of on-site car parking from the street by locating parking areas to the side or rear of buildings and the provision of appropriate landscape buffers to soften hard surfaced areas.
- Ensuring advertising signs are well designed and compatible with the area and the building.
- Implementing ecological sustainability principles and Council's Sustainability Strategy.
- Encouraging development in those areas with adequate infrastructure and excellent public transport links.
- Encouraging water and energy efficient practices through Council's Energy and Water Action Plans.
- Encouraging waste minimisation and litter management through the implementation of Council's Waste Management Plan.
- Promote the use of sustainable transport through the implementation of Council's Integrated Transport Strategy.
- Managing development along the City's waterways to ensure there is no detrimental impact on water quality.
- Encouraging appropriate construction methods to minimise impact on vegetation, stormwater, litter and neighbourhood amenity.
- Implementing Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines for the Tally Ho Activity Centre.
- Implementing best practice in environmentally sustainable development.

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Implementation

These strategies will be implemented by:

Zones and overlays

- Applying a Significant Landscape Overlay to Bush Environment character precincts.

WHITEHORSE PLANNING SCHEME

- Applying a Significant Landscape Overlay to all remaining residential areas in the municipality.
- Applying a Neighbourhood Character Overlay to areas adjoining Blackburn Shopping Centre.
- Applying a Neighbourhood Character Overlay to an area around Box Hill.
- Applying a Vegetation Protection Overlay to identified significant vegetation.
- Applying an Environmental Significance Overlay to land at 131-173 Central Road, Nunawading.
- Applying an Environmental Significance Overlay to the land at 15 Virgillia Street, Blackburn North.
- Applying a Heritage Overlay to the buildings and structures listed on the Victorian Heritage Register and identified in City of Whitehorse heritage reviews.
- Applying an Urban Floodway Zone where appropriate to ensure that development and use along the City's waterways is of a nature that does not negatively impact on water quality.
- Applying a Special Building Overlay to areas identified by Melbourne Water as being subject to inundation during a one in one hundred year flood to ensure that development along overland flow paths does not adversely affect the movement of floodwater and water quality.
- Applying a Design and Development Overlay to parts of the Tally Ho Activity Centre.

Policy and the exercise of discretion

- Using Clause 22.03 (Residential Development Policy) and Clause 22.04 (Tree Conservation) to supplement ResCode for the assessment of all residential applications.
- Ensuring that lot sizes in the area affected by the Significant Landscape Overlay in Bush Environment character precincts are generally in accordance with the prevailing minimum lot size of 650 square metres.
- Ensuring that all tree removal, tree replanting and development complies with the Tree Conservation Policy at Clause 22.04.
- Apply the tall tree ratio in the Significant Landscape Overlay to all applications in the Bush Environment character precincts.
- Strongly encouraging the planting of indigenous species where appropriate.
- Using Clause 22.15 to ensure suitable land for public open space is provided by new developments in areas where a land contribution is preferred.
- Ensuring that all applications for signage comply with the Visual Amenity Policy at Clause 22.02.
- Requiring professional landscape plans (including the planting of upper canopy trees) for all new developments.
- Using Clause 22.01 Heritage Buildings and Precincts and Clause 43.01 Heritage Overlay for the assessment of applications in heritage areas.
- Ensuring that all applications for industrial uses comply with the State Environment Protection Policy for Air.
- Requiring the submission of a waste management plan for all multi-dwelling developments.
- Ensuring that development complies with requirements of the *Tally Ho Activity Centre Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines* March 2013.
- Ensuring that specified developments meet the requirements of the Environmentally Sustainable Development Policy at Clause 22.10.

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Further strategic work

- Develop an Environmentally Sustainable Development policy.
- Review further areas for inclusion in Neighbourhood Character Overlays.

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Reference documents

Guidelines for Areas of Special Significance

Blackburn Lake Surrounds Study, 2002

Walker Estate Special Character Area Urban Character Study, May 1999

Whitehorse Economic Development Strategy 2014-2019

Whitehorse Neighbourhood Character Study 2014

KLM City of Whitehorse, Neighbourhood Character Study Review of areas 14 and 16 February 2004

Whitehorse Sustainability Strategy 2008-2013, April 2008

Whitehorse Integrated Transport Strategy, May 2011

Whitehorse Energy Action Plan 2009-2014

Whitehorse Water Action Plan 2008-2013

Review of Neighbourhood Character Implementation Recommendations, Part 2 Review Areas, July 2004

131 Central Road, Nunawading: Vegetation Assessment by Stephen Mueck, Biosis (November 2007)

Flora, fauna and habitat hectare assessment of 15 Virgillia Street Blackburn North Victoria, Biosis Research, April 2008

Collina Dell SLO Review, October 2007

Whitehorse Open Space Strategy, Thompson Berrill Landscape Design Pty Ltd, in association with Environment & Land Management Pty Ltd, November 2007

Review of Three Precincts in Character Areas 16 & 18, May 2008

Tally Ho Major Activity Centre Urban Design Framework, 2007

Tally Ho Activity Centre Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines, 2013

Municipal Wide Tree Study Discussion Paper, March 2016

Municipal Wide Tree Study Options and Recommendations Report, June 2016

Municipal Wide Tree Study Part 2: Additional Analysis in Garden Suburban and Bush Suburban Character Precincts, March 2019