

## 22.02 NATIVE VEGETATION POLICY

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This policy applies wherever a permit is required to remove native vegetation or where the subdivision of land will result in the removal of native vegetation (excluding land covered by the Significant Landscape Overlay Schedules 6 and 7).

### 22.02-1 Policy basis

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Manningham contains areas of significant native vegetation supporting a diverse range of indigenous flora, fauna and vegetation communities. Many of these species are rare or threatened at a local, state or national level.

The most intact and significant areas of native vegetation have been mapped and classified into 35 Sites of Biological Significance (Biosites) and are identified as being of National, State or Regional significance according to the *Sites of (Biological) Significance Review*, 2004.

The Biosites support the majority of Manningham's biodiversity and are referred to as 'Core Conservation Areas'. Within the Core Conservation Areas (Biosites) areas of vegetation of the highest quality are referred to as 'Critical Conservation Areas'.

Other areas of native vegetation more modified from their presumed 'natural' condition than Core Conservation Areas, are classified as 'Buffer Conservation Areas'. Buffer Conservation Areas have environmental values in their own right, as well as providing additional (usually adjacent) habitat that supports the ecological integrity and function of Core Conservation Areas. Core and Buffer Conservation Areas are protected by Environmental Significance Overlays.

Areas with native trees and patches of native vegetation also occur outside of Core and Buffer Conservation areas. Whilst these areas may be of lesser environmental value or significance, they still have habitat values worthy of protection and provide landscape amenity and character. Such areas include low density residential areas (Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 1), and the Domain Estate, Templestowe (Significant Landscape Overlay Schedule 3).

The Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) recognises the value and importance of all of Manningham's native vegetation in providing important ecosystem services such as the maintenance of atmosphere and climate; filtration and purification of water and maintenance of soil fertility and structure. Additionally Manningham's indigenous vegetation also has an important habitat corridor function for the region in facilitating movement of wildlife, seeds and pollen across the landscape.

The MSS further recognises that Manningham's native vegetation is threatened by removal and other impacts including overgrazing by stock (particularly horses), pest plant and animal invasion, changes in burning regimes, soil erosion and changes in sub-catchment hydrology and climate change. These threats contribute directly and indirectly to the loss of local biodiversity by impairing ecological processes, resulting in habitat loss and fragmentation and local species extinction.

These threatening processes need to be addressed if the municipality's native vegetation is to be conserved and enhanced and the goal of an overall gain (Net Gain) at a local level in the extent and quality of native vegetation, is to be achieved.

This policy:

- applies the conservation of native flora and fauna SPPF objective in clause 15.09 to local circumstances.
- provides guidance and clarification regarding the application of *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management - A Framework for Action*, (Department of Natural Resources and Environment 2002) in Manningham.
- applies the findings and conclusions of three key ecological studies for Manningham:

- *Sites of (Biological) Significance Review (2004)*
- *Wildlife Movement and Habitat Needs in Manningham (2009)*
- *Locally Threatened Plants in Manningham (2010).*

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**Objectives**

The objectives of this policy are:

- To establish principles and guidelines for the implementation of ‘Net Gain’ within Manningham.
- To protect, conserve and where possible enhance the biodiversity values of the municipality.
- To recognise, protect and conserve ecosystem services and functions.
- To protect and conserve and where possible enhance Manningham’s native vegetation particularly Biosites - Sites of Biological Significance (Core Conservation Areas) and Buffer Conservation Areas.
- To protect, conserve and enhance habitat corridors and habitat connectivity.
- To protect and conserve species of indigenous flora and/or fauna which are considered threatened within Manningham.
- To minimise, mitigate and manage threatening processes and negative impacts upon indigenous flora and fauna.

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**Policy**

It is policy that:

- The primary consideration in assessing applications for vegetation removal should be the quantity and conservation significance of the vegetation proposed to be removed.
- The removal or destruction of native vegetation within Critical Conservation Areas (as identified in Schedule 2 to the Environmental Significance Overlay, Clause 42.01), or habitat corridors, will generally not be permitted unless:
  - exceptional circumstances apply;
  - the removal of native vegetation has been avoided so far as practicable;
  - if impacts cannot be avoided, the removal of native vegetation has been minimised through appropriate planning and expert input to project design or management; and
  - appropriate offsets that meet the requirements of Victoria’s Native Vegetation Management: A Framework for Action and the Port Phillip and Western Port Native Vegetation Plan are achievable.
- The removal or destruction of native vegetation within Core Conservation Areas (as identified in Schedule 2 to the Environmental Significance Overlay, Clause 42.01), will be discouraged and should only be permitted if:
  - the removal of native vegetation has been avoided so far as practicable;
  - if impacts cannot be avoided, the removal of native vegetation has been minimised through appropriate planning and expert input to project design or management; and
  - appropriate offsets that meet the requirements of Victoria’s Native Vegetation Management: A Framework for Action are achievable.
- The removal or destruction of native vegetation will only be permitted in all other areas where it is unavoidable, is the minimum amount required for the proposed land use, and can be adequately offset by the protection and/or recruitment of indigenous vegetation.

- Native vegetation should not be removed where it will result in the removal or destruction of a rare or threatened flora or fauna species at the municipal, state or federal level; or where it will adversely affect the long term survival and reproduction of a rare or threatened flora or fauna species at the municipal, state or federal level.
- Native vegetation should not be removed where it will result in the fragmentation or isolation of patches of remnant vegetation and/or negate the ability of an area of native vegetation to provide habitat or function as a habitat corridor.
- Native vegetation should not be removed or destroyed on land with a slope of greater than 20 percent.
- Native vegetation should not be removed within 30 metres of watercourses to maximise the function of waterways as habitat corridors.
- Native vegetation should not be removed or destroyed in areas where offsets have previously been achieved.
- Where offsets are required the following principles apply:
  - All offsets should be located and provided in compliance with *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management: A Framework for Action* and the *Port Phillip and Western Port Native Vegetation Plan*.
  - Offsets should preferably be located on the same property as the proposed works or development, unless this is clearly not practical or possible or it can be shown that a better environmental outcome can be achieved off-site.
  - It is Council's preference that offsets be located within the municipality unless this is not achievable.
  - Offsets for the removal, lopping or destruction of native vegetation on privately owned and non-council owned land should preferably be created on land of the same tenure.

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**Decision guidelines**

It is policy that the responsible authority considers, as appropriate:

- The extent to which the application complies with *Victoria's Native Vegetation Management: A Framework for Action* and the *Port Phillip and Western Port Native Vegetation Plan*.
- The extent to which the application has met the requirement to avoid, minimise and offset native vegetation removal to achieve a net gain outcome;
- The impact of any proposed vegetation removal on Critical, Core or Buffer Conservation Areas and/or other surrounding habitat.
- The impact of any proposed vegetation removal on threatened species and identified habitat corridors.
- The extent to which the application meets the objectives and directions of this policy.

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**Policy references**

Foreman, P. (2004) *Sites of (Biological) Significance Review*, Manningham City Council, Doncaster.

Lorimer G., Baker S., and Lockwood D., (2009) *Wildlife Movement and Habitat Needs in Manningham*, Manningham City Council. Doncaster

Lorimer, G. (2010) *Locally Threatened Plants in Manningham*, Manningham City Council, Doncaster.