



Policy 9: Guidelines for Preparing Fire Management Plans

Chapter 1 Introduction

In 1998, Council adopted the **Gold Coast City Bushfire Management Strategy (GCCBMS)** to address the risk that uncontrolled fires present to life and property in the City. Whilst recognising the ecological role of fire, Council determined that large areas within the City are subject to bushfire hazards, and made detailed recommendations about how such hazards should be addressed during new development in these areas. The strategy is the basis of bushfire management issues in the Gold Coast City Planning Scheme.

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of the Planning Scheme Policy is to:

- advance the purpose of the **Integrated Planning Act, 1997**, which seeks to achieve ecological sustainability by applying standards of amenity, conservation, energy, health and safety in the built environment that are cost effective and for the public benefit (**Section 1.2.3** of the **Act**);
- assist applicants to adequately address the performance criteria stated in **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code**, by clearly stating Council’s requirements for the preparation of Fire Management Plans for a proposed development. This will streamline the application/ assessment process and ensure a consistent and equitable approach throughout the City.

2.0 Application

These guidelines apply where an applicant is preparing a Fire Management Plan in accordance with the acceptable solutions of **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code**.

3.0 Status and Policy Context

Council’s commitment to ensure the safety of its residents and visitors and conserve the City’s natural environment is demonstrated through the **Gold Coast City 1998 – 2003 Corporate Plan**. Specific strategies to achieve the Corporate Plan objectives are contained in the **GCCBMS**.

Bushfire management is also addressed as part of one of the 15 Key Strategies (‘Natural Hazards Mitigation’) of the **Gold Coast City Planning Scheme (Part 3, Division 2, Chapter 12)**. These Key Strategies provide the foundation for decisions about preferred land use types throughout the City.

Chapter 2 Potential Bushfire Management Areas

1.0 What are Potential Bushfire Hazard Areas?

Potential Bushfire Hazard Areas (PBHAs) are those areas of the City that Council has identified as being subject to potential bushfire hazard on the basis of their vegetation type and topography.

Their location is indicated on **Overlay Map OM10 – Potential Bushfire Hazard Areas** of the Gold Coast City Planning Scheme. It should be noted that the Map has been prepared on a City-wide scale and as such is indicative. In all cases, a detailed site-specific assessment is required to determine the actual level of potential bushfire hazard on a given site.

2.0 What Do Potential Bushfire Hazard Areas Mean for Development?

The **Overlay Map OM10 – Potential Bushfire Hazard Areas** indicates areas of High, Medium and Low potential bushfire hazard. The **GCCBMS** identifies the following outcomes that should be sought for development in each of these areas.

HIGH PBHAs:	Wherever possible, development in these areas should be avoided or, if approved, be subject to conditions which aim to mitigate potential bushfire hazard.
MEDIUM PBHAs:	Development in these areas is likely to be subject to a number of requirements aimed at mitigating potential bushfire hazard and protecting the safety of residents.
LOW PBHAs:	These areas do not warrant special planning controls. Rather, the focus is on ensuring community awareness and providing advice to residents.



It should be noted that the Gold Coast City Planning Scheme sets requirements for development on sites in HIGH and MEDIUM PBHAs. The preferred outcomes for LOW PBHAs are sought through a range of other activities, as part of the implementation of the **GCCBMS**.

3.0 What are the Development Requirements?

In order to achieve the above outcomes, the Planning Scheme sets out a number of requirements that development proposals must meet. These are contained in **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code** and summarised in the following table.

Table 1: Summary of Performance Requirements in PBHAs

Development Requirement	Level of Development Assessment		
	Self Assessable	Code Assessable	Impact Assessable
Compliance with an approved Fire Management Plan	✓	✓	✓
Appropriate house site location	✓	✓	✓
Building design and construction	✓	✓	✓
Provision of adequate water supplies		✓	✓
Appropriate clearing and landscaping		✓	✓
Provision of fire/ maintenance trails		✓	✓
Advice to new residents		✓	✓
Appropriate vehicle access		✓	✓
Appropriate lot layout		✓	✓
Appropriate land use		✓	✓

Note: *Indicates those areas where development requirements apply. Council may vary the above development requirements, following determination of potential bushfire hazard at the site.*

A checklist based on this Table is provided at the end of this Planning Scheme Policy to assist applicants check that they have addressed all the issues relevant to their site.

Chapter 3 Preparing a Fire Management Plan

1.0 What is a Fire Management Plan?

A Fire Management Plan is a statement of how the development meets each of the requirements set out in the Planning Scheme, in particular, the performance criteria stated in **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code**. It is also an essential document for future residents of the site, as it clearly defines the level of hazard on the site and identifies actions required for the ongoing management of those hazards.

1.1 Do You Need One?

You will need to submit a Fire Management Plan if you meet all the following criteria:

- your development is required to comply with the performance criteria in the **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code**;
- a site-based assessment (see **Clause 1.4** below) confirms that your proposed development site is located wholly or partly within a HIGH and/or MEDIUM PBHA;
- an approved Fire Management Plan that accords with these guidelines does not exist for the proposed development site.

1.2 Who Should Prepare It?

The Fire Management Plan should be prepared by a suitably qualified and experienced consultant in consultation with relevant stakeholders (see **Clause 1.6** below). The consultant should have qualifications and/or experience in all aspects of bushfire management, including fire prevention and fire suppression. They should also have demonstrated experience in fire management planning activities in the Southeast Queensland/ Northern New South Wales region.



1.3 What Area Should It Cover?

The Fire Management Plan should address the whole of the proposed development site. During its preparation, consideration should also be given to:

- the site's context within the broader area, particularly in relation to potential off-site sources of increased fire hazard (caused by land use type or physical features);
- the impact of the proposed land use on fire hazards for surrounding lots; and
- any implications for the conservation of ecologically significant areas both on and off the site.

1.4 What Should It Address?

The plan should:

- a) Identify the location and severity of potential bushfire hazard by means site-based assessment. This assessment should be based on detailed data collected at the local level and take into account factors such as vegetation type, slope, aspect, and fire history (if available). This assessment should also address on-and-off site hazard implications of the development, including those posed by any nearby bushland;
- b) Address the performance criteria contained in **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code**;
- c) Consider the acceptable solutions contained within **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code**, and recommend remedial measures such as specific features of the development design (eg. land use type, vehicular access, lot layout and house site location), proposed fire-fighting infrastructure (eg. water supply and fire/ maintenance trails), recommended standard of building construction, clearing and landscaping, and advice to new residents; and
- d) Clearly state any impact of the chosen mitigation measures on the environmental values of the site and the measures taken to avoid/ minimise this impact.

1.5 Who is the Target Audience?

The Fire Management Plan should be targeted at the end user, that is, the resident, the operator of business, the administrator of an educational facility, etc. It should therefore be a 'stand-alone' document, written in simple language, and should clearly identify details of the level of hazard on-site, the actions to be taken to manage such hazard, and who is responsible to take those actions.

1.6 Who Should Be Consulted?

It is essential that Local Rural or Urban Fire Brigades are consulted during the preparation of any Fire Management Plan that is to be included as part of a development application. In particular, Brigade input should be sought in relation to the level of potential bushfire hazard on the site and the provision of fire fighting infrastructure (eg. water supplies and fire/ maintenance trails). Evidence of such consultation may be required in support of a development application. The Brigade should also be provided with a final copy of the Fire Management Plan.

Where development is proposed on land adjacent to Council reserves, National Parks, State Forests or other reserves managed for nature conservation, consultation should occur with the relevant land manager regarding bushfire management as it affects nature conservation values on that reserve.

Where development is proposed on land adjacent to any public land, the applicant should liaise with the relevant land manager to determine their requirements for the construction of fire/ maintenance trails.

1.7 What Level of Detail is Required?

The above sections outline the minimum requirements for the preparation of a Fire Management Plan. However, it is recognised that some issues may not be applicable to some sites, and that the detail with which issues are to be addressed may vary between sites, in response to site-specific characteristics.

If an application must be followed by another application before any works can be commenced on the site (eg. a Material Change of Use followed by a Reconfiguration of a Lot Application), Council may allow the detailed design responses to be dealt with at that later application stage.



However, Council will still require the submission of a Fire Management Plan at the initial stage (ie. as part of the Material Change of Use Application). In this instance, the Plan should:

- be prepared by a suitably qualified person;
- meet the requirements of **Section 3.5 a)** above;
- state the **proposed responses** to each of the performance criteria contained within **Part 7, Division 3, Chapter 2 – Bushfire Management Areas Constraint Code**.

The applicant would then be required to submit a detailed Fire Management Plan addressing each of the identified issues in detail, in accordance with **Section 3.5** above, when preparing the later application.

1.8 Documentation

The Fire Management Plan is to be clearly documented in a written report submitted to Council as part of the development application. The text should be supported by appropriately scaled maps (eg. showing areas of potential bushfire hazard, proposed water supplies and fire/ maintenance trails, preferred house site locations, etc). The maps should clearly indicate the location and extent of the feature being shown, and either overlay, or be easily compared with, the proposed development design.

1.9 Relationship to the Development Design Process

Consideration of bushfire management issues is an essential part of the **Integrated Development Assessment System (IDAS)** defined under the **Integrated Planning Act 1997**. **Figure 1** illustrates how the preparation of the Fire Management Plan relates to the 'application stage' of the **IDAS** process.

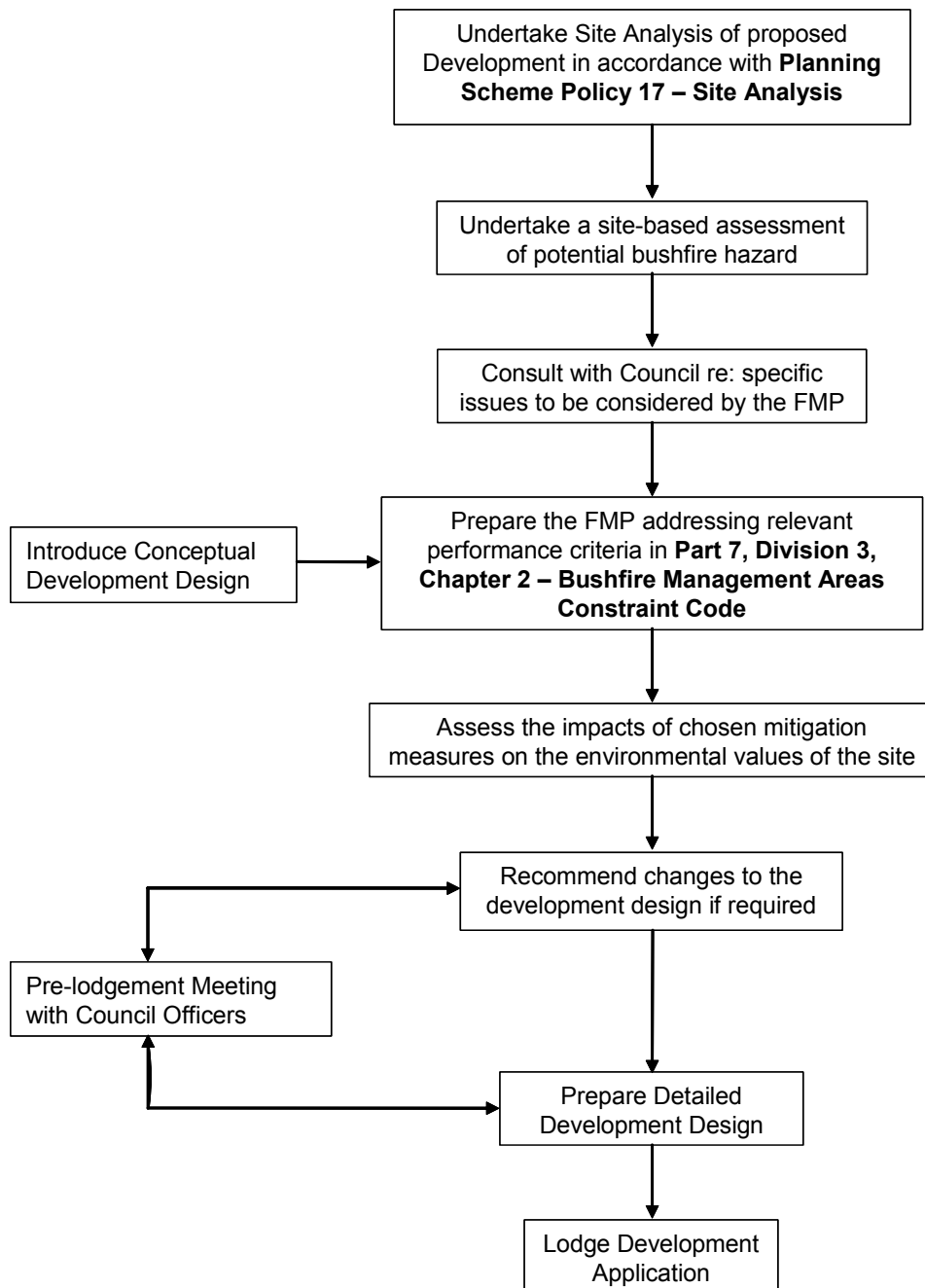


Figure 1: Preparation of Fire Management Plans and the IDAS Process

Note: *In view of the above process, it is essential that the consultant preparing the Fire Management Plan liaise with those undertaking other relevant elements of the development design to achieve integrated design solutions (eg. the elements of ecological assessment, road design, lot layout, landscaping, etc).*



Appendix 1 Where To Find Further Information

For further information about assessing the level of potential bushfire hazard, refer to:

- **Gold Coast City Bushfire Management Strategy** (Gold Coast City Council, April 1998);
- **Bushfire Hazard Planning in Queensland** (Qld. Dept. of Housing, Local Govt. & Planning, 1993).

For further guidance on **siting and design of residential buildings** in Bushfire Prone Areas, refer to the publications:

- **Bushfire Prone Areas – Siting and Design of Residential Buildings** (Qld. Dept. of Housing Local Government & Planning, 1995);
- **Building in Bushfire Prone Areas – Information and Advice** (Standards Australia & CSIRO, 1993).

Appendix 2 Checklist

The following table is provided to help applicants check that they have met all the development requirements that are relevant to their proposed development site.

Development Requirement	Level of Development Assessment					
	Self Assessable		Code Assessable		Impact Assessable	
	Req'd	Addressed	Req'd	Addressed	Req'd	Addressed
Compliance with an approved Fire Management Plan	✓		✓		✓	
Appropriate house site location	✓		✓		✓	
Building design and construction	✓		✓		✓	
Provision of adequate water supplies			✓		✓	
Appropriate clearing and landscaping			✓		✓	
Provision of fire/ maintenance trails			✓		✓	
Advice to new residents			✓		✓	
Appropriate vehicle access			✓		✓	
Appropriate lot layout			✓		✓	
Appropriate land-use			✓		✓	

Note: *If you have any further questions or require clarification, contact Gold Coast City Council's Town Planning Advice counter on (07) 5582 8708.*