RESIDENTIAL NATURESTRIP POLICY

Policy Reference No. POL/194
File No.
Strategic Objective 3.2 Enhance community pride and sense of place
Adopted by Council November 2011
Re-Adopted
Date for Review November 2014
Responsible Officer Manager Parks
Department Parks
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The aim of this policy is to document Hume City Council’s commitment to improving the appearance of the City through the maintenance and enhancement of naturestrips.

1.2 Council has approximately 66,000 rateable properties. A large number of these properties have land that is commonly referred to as a naturestrip.

1.3 This policy is designed to ensure a safe, sustainable and consistent approach to the design and selection of materials used on residential naturestrips throughout the City.

1.4 Although personalised naturestrips can provide benefit to the Community in terms of identity and the use of drought tolerant plants, it does represent a greater safety risk to the community. Therefore, Council has developed this Policy to provide a Residential Naturestrip Landscape Standard.

1.5 This Policy defines how Council will manage naturestrips in the City. It will assist residents, property owners, authorities, Council officers, contractors, developers and those working with Council, to understand the City’s requirements for the construction of naturestrips. Using the existing Proclaim Permit System to administer applications, Council will review and track applications for those residents wishing to landscape their naturestrips.

1.6 This Policy is to be read in conjunction with Hume’s Naturestrip Landscaping Guidelines, (see Appendix 2)

1.7 This policy provides drawings of approved Alternative Naturestrip Treatments (see Appendix 3), together with photographic examples of acceptable and unacceptable treatments.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 Personalised Naturestrips

2.1.1 Residents wanting to landscape a Naturestrip must apply to Council seeking a ‘Non Utility Minor Works Permit’ as required under the Road Management Act 2004 and Local Law No. 1. Unless otherwise approved, all proposed works must abide by Council’s Residential ‘Naturestrip Landscaping Guidelines’ (See Appendix 2).

2.1.2 Unauthorised works within a Road Reserve is a breach of the Road Management Act and Local Law No. 1. As such, existing naturestrips landscapes without Council consent will be reviewed against the Naturestrip Landscaping Guidelines and the resident advised of any changes required. Parks staff will determine whether the naturestrip works present an immediate risk of danger and any rectification works will be prioritised based on a risk assessment of the site. The property owner will be given a fair and reasonable time to rectify the works unless the level of risk warrants a more timely response. If the
naturestrip has been constructed as part of a street landscaping or road reconstruction project and it is in the maintenance period of the contract, any changes in levels or maintenance will be the responsibility of the contractor.

2.1.3 The property owner or residents of abutting properties are expected to undertake to general maintenance of naturestrips. This is defined as mowing, weeding, edging and any works required in keeping the naturestrip in a safe and tidy condition.

2.1.4 If a naturestrip has been damaged beyond reasonable repair Council will inspect and may carry out minor repairs to make the naturestrip safe.

2.1.5 The Service Authorities are responsible for the reinstatement of a grassed naturestrips only, if damaged following its works. The reinstatement may be undertaken by Council by arrangement with the Service Authority. Repairs or new treatments other than a basic grass treatment will be the responsibility of the land owner.

2.1.6 This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the requirements and regulations of the:

- Road Management Act 2004.
- Local Law No. 1.

2.2 Enforcement/Compliance

2.2.1 Under the Road Management Act 2004 (RM Act), Section 63(1) and 65 it is an offence to conduct works on roads without the consent of the coordinating road authority and for the failure to comply with the conditions on consents. Prior to the RM Act any works conducted in the road reservation required a permit from Council.

2.2.2 Under Clause 19 of Schedule 7 of the RM Act, Council has the power to order rectification of works where the works have not been conducted in accordance with the RM Act, or previous Legislation. The rectification is to be at the other party’s expense.

2.2.3 Penalties for non-conformance with the order to rectify works are based on set units per offence, as prescribed in the RM Act. This process will be implemented using the proclaim system after first, a written advice of the infringement is provided and second, after an official letter to comply is issued and not acted upon within the set time frame.
3 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 The Manager, Parks and Open Space will be responsible for implementing this policy in conjunction with the Manager Services as follows:

3.1.1 Residents
- Media release to outline policy detail and how it affects residents of Hume.
- Policy to be placed on Council’s website.
- Policy outline and Naturestrip Landscaping Guideline flyers produced for distribution at Council offices.
- Article to be placed on Council page in local newspapers.
- Statement on policy and its outcomes to be prepared as a message for Council’s “Message on Hold” service.
- Provision of information booklet.

3.1.2 Staff
- Customer Service, Asset Protection Officers and City Laws staff to be briefed and provided with FAQ’s.
- Article to appear in Hume People.

3.1.3 Businesses within Hume City Council
- Specific flyer prepared outlining the Policy and responsibilities.

3.1.4 Developers
- Letter containing a copy of the Policy and Guidelines.

3.1.5 The policy will be monitored as follows:
- Inspections by a Council Officer of works requested.
- Reports on non-compliance compiled by assigned staff and card forwarded to Manager, Parks and Open Space.
- All applications will be logged into the Council Proclaim System as an asset protection permit.

4 RELATED DOCUMENTS

4.1 Permit “Non Utility Minor Works within Municipal Road Reserves”.
4.2 Street Tree Policy.
4.3 Road Management Act 2004.
4.5 Hume City Plan 2030.
4.6 Hume City Council Naturestrip Landscaping Guidelines.
4.7 Local Government Act.
Appendix 2

NATURESTRIP LANDSCAPING GUIDELINES

1 Background to Guidelines

1.1 Naturestrips Summary

A naturestrip is the land that is within the boundaries of a road (other than the shoulders of the road) which is not a roadway or pathway. As stated in the Road Management Act 2004 (“RM Act”).

Naturestrips provide space for utilities such as power, water and telecom. Clear access is required for repairs or tapping new lines within the naturestrip.

The Naturestrip Landscaping Guidelines have been developed to ensure a safe, sustainable and consistent approach to the design and selection of materials used on naturestrips throughout the City. They have also been developed as a result of the ongoing drought conditions and subsequent inability to sustain turf on a naturestrip.

1.2 Guidelines Scope

These Guidelines provide residents with landscape treatment options which could apply to the naturestrip in front of their properties. These are Guidelines only and Council will consider each application on a case by case basis.

1.3 Alternative Naturestrip Treatments

The objective of these guidelines is to achieve a safe and sustainable environment for Hume. These guidelines set out the requirements necessary to achieve this objective.

Three treatment options will be considered:

1.3.1 Grass: warm season grasses such as Couch, Buffalo or Kikuyu
1.3.2 Mulch: such as organic barks or in organic gravel.
1.3.3 Planted: only low growing species below 400mm allowed.

2 Applications

2.1 An application is required pursuant to both the Road Management Act 2004 and Local Law No. 1.

2.2 Any works conducted on the naturestrip without the consent of the Council will be in breach of the RM Act and Local Law No 1.

2.3 2.3 An application for a permit to alter a naturestrip from grass to one of the listed treatments can be obtained from the Hume City Council website or by contacting any Hume City Council Customer Service Centre.

2.4 The application, a "Non Utility Minor Works Permit", must be completed with a landscape plan to include, location of treatment, dimensions and areas to be treated with details of materials to be used. There is no fee for this permit application.
2.5 The Council will not unreasonably withhold consent for the naturestrip works. However, it reserves the right to make the final decision on any application and insert appropriate conditions where necessary.

2.6 If the works are not carried out in accordance to the consent granted, Council can request rectification works, or carry out such works at the expense of the persons responsible for the works.

2.7 Council WILL NOT accept any financial responsibility for changes or repairs to the landscaped naturestrip. Such costs will be at the adjoining land owner’s expense. Council will only repair grassed nature strips where it represents a risk to the community.

3 Approvals

3.1 Approvals will be based on the “Non Utility Minor Works Permit” being completed with site and landscape plans and the required information supplied. The application meets the required standard set out in these guidelines.

3.2 The applicant must provide a copy of title when an application for permit is made.

3.3 The application must meet the standards outlined in the Guidelines.

3.4 The applicant accepts full responsibility for public safety during the construction of the approved landscape works.

4 General Points

4.1 Public safety is paramount. The designated work area MUST BE KEPT SAFE at all times. This requires safety barriers, bunting, barriers mesh or safety tape around the boundary of the work area as a minimum. These barriers will be required for the duration of the project.

4.2 Materials removed from or delivered to the site are to be contained within the barrier at all times.

4.3 Applicants are required to call Dial “1100” before you dig for any excavation greater in depth than 200mm deep.

4.4 Relevant Service Authorities will need to be advised of works in naturestrip reserves as prescribed in RM Act.

4.5 Timber or other types of edging when used must be installed with the top edge level and flush with the kerb and footpath surface. Material used must remain firm in place and not warp.

4.6 Irrigation or private lighting systems are not permitted on the naturestrips.

4.7 Council will not permit rocks, bluestone pitchers, railway sleepers or retaining walls to be installed in the naturestrip. These items are all potentially tripping hazards so can not be included in the naturestrip.

4.8 Retaining structures will be considered where there is a steep crossfall between the street alignment level and road.
4.9 If a “Swale Drain” is located within the naturestrip, treatments other than grass are not permitted.

4.10 Service Box’s or Pit Covers are often in place in naturestrips. Such box’s or pit covers are not to be covered or removed and must remain accessible.

4.11 Organisations that supply water, gas, electricity and telecommunications may require access to the naturestrip to do maintenance work. The utility organisations are required to make good the naturestrip following their maintenance work. Council cannot guarantee that any of the maintenance contractors will replace plants and mulch in the same condition as prior to maintenance work.

5 Alternative Naturestrip Treatment Guidelines

Please refer to Appendix 3 for examples of alternative naturestrip treatments.

5.1 Grass Naturestrip

It is recommended that the following points are considered when constructing a grass naturestrip.

5.1.1 Remove any building rubble such as concrete debris or plaster/timber off cuts etc and excess soil to 100-150mm below the top of the kerb or footpath level.

5.1.2 Spread 100-150mm with good quality topsoil. Bring the soil level to the top of the kerb and footpath if present.

5.1.3 Lightly compact the soil with a roller or by walking over the area until a firm and flat surface is achieved.

5.1.4 Rake until level and smooth.

5.1.5 Select a lawn seed mix. Council recommends the use of Couch, Buffalo or Kikuyu grasses as they are hard wearing and require up to 60% less water than conventional grasses.

5.1.6 Water the area until it is evenly moist. Keep seed bed moist until germination. Taper off watering as grass gets established. Watering must be in accordance with Water Restrictions as prescribed by the relevant Water Authorities.

5.1.7 If turf sods are used, roll them out ensuring that all edges are abutting and that the turf is cut off neatly along the edge of the kerb, footpath and any valve box and or lids in the naturestrip.

5.1.8 Use of seed preparation or lawn starter fertilizer could be considered.

5.2 Mulched Naturestrip

It is recommended that the following points be considered when constructing a mulched naturestrip.
5.2.1 No compaction is allowed around the base of the naturestrip tree within the drip line. The final level must be from top of kerb to the top of the footpath and level across.

5.2.2 To ensure no root damage occurs during excavation work, hand digging is required within one metre of the base of the naturestrip tree. No soil is to be removed within this area to ensure a suitable growth medium is available for tree establishment.

5.2.3 Organic mulches can be used provided they are between 10mm-30mm diameter. Care must be taken to ensure that mulch does not flow over kerbs and be likely to block drains.

5.2.4 Two inorganic materials are permitted for use on a naturestrip:

- Lilydale or Tuscan toppings
- Granitic Gravel also called Granitic Sand

5.2.5 To prevent/reduce tripping hazards, no large boulders are permitted to be placed on the naturestrip.

5.2.6 Mulched treatments will generally not be permitted on sloping sites due to washout potential.

5.3 Planted Naturestrip

It is recommended that the following points be considered when constructing a planted naturestrip.

5.3.1 No additional trees are to be planted on the naturestrip. Council is responsible for the planting and maintenance of street trees. Please advise Council if your street tree has died or is missing.

5.3.2 Plantings are to be no more than 400mm in height on maturity. Vegetation above 400mm may hinder or obscure driver sight lines. It is the responsibility of the landowner to ensure that plants do not exceed 400mm in height.

5.3.3 To reduce the likelihood of trip hazards on planted naturestrips, it is recommended that planting be made in clusters or blocks at spacing of 1m, rather than single plantings. This will allow pedestrian movement on the naturestrip adjacent as well as parallel to the kerb.

5.3.4 One metre of CLEAR access around the letter box is required to meet Australia Post requirements.

5.3.5 Plantings must not hinder car passengers alighting from cars parked along kerbs. A one metre CLEAR buffer must be maintained along the kerb length within the planted area using mulch or gravel (please refer to Appendix 1).

5.3.6 Planted naturestrips must provide suitable space for the provision of waste and recycling bins.

5.3.7 To prevent competition with the naturestrip tree, NO planting is permitted within one metre of the base of the tree.
5.3.8 The planting selection must be in context to your front yard and/or estate median treatments. Proposed plant species must be indicated on your site plan with the application for consideration.

5.3.9 Planted naturestrips can be accompanied by mulch covers as described in Section 5.2.

5.3.10 For a list of suitable plants to use please refer to Hume’s Sustainable Gardening Handbook.

5.3.11 Council will only allow planted naturestrips if the land owner's insurance policy indemnifies Council against an injury claim.

6 Maintenance Responsibilities

Residents are required to keep the naturestrip in a well maintained and safe condition at all times.

6.1 Plants are to be pruned to a height of no more than 400mm at all times.

6.2 Plants are to be pruned so that they do not protrude onto pathways, driveways or beyond the back of the kerb.

6.3 The naturestrip is to be kept free of weeds and rubbish.

6.4 A Mulch cover is to be maintained over the naturestrip.

6.5 No Mulch is allowed onto the footpath, driveways or in the kerb and channel.

6.6 The naturestrip is to be free of any tripping hazards and any protruding objects.
Appendix 3 – Alternative Naturestrip Treatment – Layout

MINIMUM CLEARWAY OF 1.5m FOR PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC. TREATMENT TO BE APPROVED - SUBJECT TO EXISTING CONDITIONS.

Proposed Naturestrip Development
Appendix 3 – Alternative Naturestrip Treatment

Installation details for alternative Option 1 - Planted Naturestrip

Installation details for alternative Option 2 - Mulched Naturestrip
Appendix 3 - Examples of Naturestrip Treatments

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Bad</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuscan Toppings replacing grass &amp; mulch to base of tree (Preferred Practice)</td>
<td>Traffic sight lines and pedestrian access blocked</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good planting example</td>
<td>Tripping Hazards for pedestrians from pavers and rocks</td>
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RESIDENTIAL NATURESTRIP POLICY

Good Planting and mulching

Pedestrian access blocked and tripping hazard.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date Adopted</th>
<th>November 2009</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date Re-Adopted</td>
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