



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



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UPPER SWAN

LOCALITY PLAN

March 2022

Ngala kaaditj Whadjuk moort keyen kaadak nidja Boodja

We acknowledge the Whadjuk people as the original owners of this land

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VISION

A healthy river for all, to be enjoyed and shared, now and in the future.

The social benefits, environmental values and cultural significance of the river are respected.

Land use, design and development ensure that the river and its value to the community is protected and enhanced.

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INTRODUCTION

The Swan Canning river system is a complex and dynamic natural landscape that extends beyond the river channel. A properly functioning river alters the position of its channels and foreshore, frequently spills over its banks and occasionally occupies its floodplain. The river should be understood as this larger natural system.

The Upper Swan Locality Plan guides adjacent land use, civic design, and development to ensure that the value of the river and its setting to the community is maintained. The Locality Plan brings together “on” and “off” water considerations to provide guidance for recreation, development, restoration and rehabilitation of the Swan and Canning rivers.

The Locality Plan is to be read in conjunction with *Corporate Policy XX – Planning for Localities along the Swan Canning Development Control Area*, which establishes key development principles to direct and inform development (including use of the land and water). These principles are supported by the below series of intended locality-specific development outcomes. The development principles and outcomes are to be demonstrated as part of any proposal.

The Locality Plan is adopted as policy to support the implementation of the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006* and is to be given due regard in relation to strategic and statutory planning that may affect the river.

The Locality Plan is supported by an Action Plan that aims to direct strategic planning and works in the locality. The actions, while not adopted as policy, should be delivered when opportunity presents. The Action Plan will be updated as needed. Delivery of the actions is subject to funding and resources.

The extent of the Upper Swan locality is identified in Figure 1. The development outcomes apply to land within and affecting (including visually) the Swan Canning development control area and includes public and private land.

POLICY AREA

A dominant open rural landscape character extends from Reid Highway to the Darling Scarp. The agricultural land uses in this area include viticulture, orchards, and equestrian properties. The Swan Valley grape vines are an important and distinctive element of rural character and local tourism.



Figure 1: Upper Swan Locality

Foreshore vegetation has been largely cleared for agriculture, leaving a narrow strip of fringing vegetation along the Swan River and its tributaries. This provides a very narrow natural element. Flooded gums, paperbarks and sedges are the dominant riparian species. The braided channels of the river, oxbow lakes and views up to the Darling Scarp add to the landscape character of this area. Public access to the Swan River foreshore is often restricted. River access is mostly only available from private properties and wineries and other tourism activities.

The river retains some wildness in its character in the upper reaches of the river, where it approaches the Walyunga National Park. This stretch of the river is particularly attractive because of the varied terrain and relatively undisturbed vegetation communities. The river flows over several exposed granite outcrops, which creates small waterfalls and rapids, such as Bells Rapids, that are the attraction of the annual Avon Descent power and paddle boat race.

Middle Swan Reserve, Yagan Memorial Park, the State Equestrian Centre and Bells Rapids are notable public destinations. The upper section of the river is surrounded by Walyunga National Park, with the railway line alongside it. Much of the river through the national park is accessible via walk trails and informal paths and a lookout from O'Brien Road provides a spectacular view of the river and park. The natural landscape character extends along the river through the Walyunga National Park, Avon Valley National Park and Paruna Wildlife Sanctuary that links these parks.

A rural landscape character is also present on the Darling Range at Bullsbrook, Moondyne and Gidgegannup. These locations include rural living zones and larger farms. These properties overlook the Avon River valley. This rural landscape character is a common element of the immediate riparian zone of the Swan and Avon rivers in this locality.

DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Maintaining the River System and its Setting as a Community Resource

6.1 Planning and decision making is to contribute to securing a continuous public foreshore reserve throughout this locality.

Securing Public Access to the River System

6.2 Provide an accessible public open space network. Pathways within the floodplain are to be at-grade, acknowledging that they may be inundated. The design is to respond to the site and local context. In some areas an informal path, such as a trail, is preferred due to the environmental sensitivities.

Maintaining a Sense of Place

6.3 Preserve the natural values of the Darling Scarp. On the Swan Coastal Plain, enhance the integration and association of the floodway with the natural landscape of the river.

6.4 Conserve the history and cultural heritage of the Swan Valley through protection of its unique natural landscape and rural character.

6.5 With permission, use Whadjuk Noongar place names across the locality.

ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

Increasing Climate Resilience

6.6 Where water quality is addressed and flood capacity is sufficient, direct clean stormwater runoff from the urban zone to the Ellen Brook through water sensitive infrastructure to address reduced flows due to climate change.

Protecting the Natural Environment

6.7 Ensure land use and development in the Swan Valley enhances the natural environment of the Swan River catchment, protects native vegetation, wetlands and waterways and appropriately manages soils and water resources.

6.8 Land use and development that has the potential to impact on environmental values is to incorporate an appropriate buffer or increased set back to the waterway.

6.9 Retain all remaining Guildford and Swan complex vegetation and preserve local natural areas.

Protecting Fringing Vegetation

- 6.10 Protect existing fringing vegetation, including trees on the riverside of development.
- 6.11 Restore native fringing vegetation so it appears as a green band when viewed from the river, particularly where weeds and extensive historical understorey clearing have degraded the riparian floodplain vegetation.

Creating and Maintaining Foreshore Reserves

- 6.12 Ensure that subdivisions and development incorporate adequate foreshore reserves and building setbacks. Where the development site is elevated and visible from the river channel, such as on the outside corner of river bends or downstream of Bells Rapid, setbacks will be required from the edge of the embankment.

Minimising Dredging and Channel Disturbance

- 6.13 Protect and maintain the natural function and form of the natural riparian landform elements, such as the alluvial terraces, floodway, embankments, riverbanks and channel.
- 6.14 Filling within the floodway or redirection of waterways, including for channel crossings, is not permitted. The use of culverts for channel crossings is not permitted as they act as barriers to aquatic biota.

Implementing Responsible Drainage Management Practices

- 6.15 Improve nutrient and irrigation practices, including through the implementation of a current best-practice management plan and creation of buffers of native vegetation along the river's edge.
- 6.16 Restrict construction of on-stream dams and other barriers, and prominent earthworks.

Applying Appropriate Water Management Practices

- 6.17 Development and land use intensification in unsewered areas is to be supported by a wastewater management plan that demonstrates no new sources of nutrients to the river.

Rehabilitating the River System

- 6.18 Restore Swan River tributaries and drainage lines, such as Jane Brook, Susannah Brook, Henley Brook and Ellen Brook.
- 6.19 Protect riverbanks in their natural state. Revegetation with native species is the most suitable riverbank stabilisation method in this locality. Undertake succession planting. Encourage the establishment of a minimum 30-metre-wide vegetated riverbank corridor on each side of the channel.

CULTURAL AND NATURAL HERITAGE

Conserving the Cultural and Natural Heritage of the River System and its Setting

- 6.20 Protect and maintain the heritage buildings and heritage riparian infrastructure that are important landscape elements of the Swan River.
- 6.21 Protect places of Aboriginal cultural significance, including sites along the river in Walyunga National Park and sites that may not be listed on the Aboriginal Heritage Places register.

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Promoting Sensitive Design and Built Form to Complement the River Landscape

- 6.22 Do not support private development or subdivision of land within the floodway.
- 6.23 Ensure that natural landforms and tree lines are the dominant visual elements of the river landscape. Ensure the river slopes and floodway are not degraded either visually or physically.
- 6.24 Ensure development is appropriately located, designed, scaled and landscaped and existing vegetation retained to enhance the unique landscape character of the Swan Valley.

Creating Linkages and Greenways

- 6.25 Development and land use changes along tributaries and drainage lines, such as Jane Brook, Susannah Brook, Henley Brook, Ellen Brook and Brockman River, are to contribute to improved water quality entering the Swan River.
- 6.26 Maintain or create ecological linkages between natural areas, including along the Swan River, Jane Brook, Susannah Brook, Henley Brook and Ellen Brook and between Bush forever areas and local bushland and the waterway.

Activating the Foreshores

- 6.27 Enhance passive recreation at established public parks by providing public facilities that enhance the community's enjoyment of and connection to the river environment, with a focus on nature-based activities.
- 6.28 Activation in foreshore areas impacted by the floodway should be temporary, such as pop-up facilities and events with self-contained servicing. Minor community amenities that can be inundated, such as nature-play, picnic facilities and pathways, may be accepted within the floodway.
- 6.29 Community jetties are to be fixed structures. Where appropriate, enhance the use of the river for kayaking and canoeing. Jetty design should consider the incorporation of launching or short-term tie-up facilities for kayaks and canoes.

6.30 Encourage opportunities to learn about river ecology, conservation, history and heritage, including through art, interpretation, signage and nature-based play.

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ACTION PLAN

Action	Timing (years) 0-2, 2-5, 5+	Key agencies (in addition to DBCA)	Notes
<p>6.31 Undertake long-term planning to increase the provision and width of the foreshore Parks and Recreation reserve in this locality, particularly where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. There is currently no provision of Parks and Recreation reserve; ii. The characteristics of the land or qualities of the area should be reflected; iii. It is currently difficult to provide public access, maintenance access or other public use, such as allowing access at the top of an embankment if other locations are not feasible; iv. The natural functions of the river should be accommodated; v. A buffer should be established between the adjoining land use and waterway, such as a buffer to agriculture, horticulture or equestrian activities, to minimise sediment, nutrient and organic matter inputs; vi. There is remnant vegetation, such as providing an important wildlife corridor connecting Walyunga National Park and Avon Valley National Park, or a Bush Forever area; vii. There is a tributary that connects to the Swan River, such as Susannah Brook, Jane Brook and the confluence of the Ellen Brook and Henley Brook; viii. There is opportunity to create natural landscape character as a buffer between the Swan River foreshore and the rural land uses at Ellen Brook, Yagan Memorial Park, Pullman Park and between Upper Swan and Brigadoon; and ix. There are freehold lots contained entirely within the FPM 1 in 100 (1%) annual exceedance probability floodway. 	5+	CoS, DPLH	Consider as part of strategic planning

6.32	Investigate options for additional public foreshore parks and public kayak/canoe launching facilities or beach river access points, downstream of Walyunga National Park.	5+	CoS, DPLH	Consider as part of strategic planning
6.33	Investigate options for establishing a designated trail along the Swan River foreshore, such as expanding the Swan Valley cycle trail or the Swan and Canning Riverpark Iconic Trails Project.	5+	CoS, DPLH, DoT, TWA	Consider as part of strategic planning
6.34	Prioritise development and implementation of a program to establish a minimum 30-metre-wide revegetated riverbank corridor using local native species to improve long term environmental and amenity outcomes. The Swan River is a major ecological linkage in the Swan Valley.	2-5	CoS, DPLH	Consider as part of strategic planning or relevant proposals
6.35	Work with landowners to improve land management practices to minimise nutrient and non-nutrient contaminant inputs into the river, with a particular focus on rural pursuits within the FPM 1 in 100 (1%) annual exceedance probability floodway.	5+	CoS, DWER, DPIRD	
6.36	Implement the recommendations of the <i>Saint Leonards Creek Foreshore Condition Assessment</i> (DBCA, 2020).	5+	CoS, DWER, DPLH	
6.37	Investigate addition of the Bells Rapids Waterfall to Bells Rapids Park to assist with coordinated management activities.	2-5	CoS, DPLH	

CoS City of Swan

DBCA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

DoT Department of Transport

DPIRD Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

DPLH Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage

DWER Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

TWA Tourism Western Australia

WC Water Corporation