

‘In principle’ Masterplan Agreements in Bush Fire Prone Areas

This Practice Note is designed to provide best practice guidelines for ‘in principle’ agreements by the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) for masterplans within bush fire prone areas¹.

A masterplan is essentially a document that consists of written information, maps and diagrams that outlines proposals for development of the land to which the master plan applies. It is a **strategic plan** that sets **broad guidelines** to guide future development.

Masterplanning provides an opportunity to undertake constraint mapping and to identify bush fire protection measures upfront. For the purposes of bush fire assessment it allows for developers to demonstrate due consideration for the bush fire risk that exists within a subject site, and incorporate appropriate bush fire mitigation and design elements.

A common output of a masterplan is a land use plan showing how different uses of land (e.g. residential, commercial, open space) and intensities of use (e.g. low density residential, medium density residential) are distributed throughout an area. It may also include information about the staging of development

The density of sites and proposed land use should be evaluated against the extent of

surrounding bush fire vegetation and minimum asset protection zones required. Specific consideration should be given to the location of any proposed high density development (such as high rise residential units), or vulnerable developments (such as nursing homes, schools, child care centres) which may be inappropriate for high risk bush fire prone areas.

In principle agreement

An in principle agreement means the RFS supports the intention of the masterplan and the proposed land uses. This gives a level of certainty to the development of a subject area (for example a staged released subdivision).

In general the RFS will only accept for consideration proposals that will result in 100 or more lots.

Obtaining agreement

An in principle agreement for a master plan can be obtained from the RFS at any stage in the planning process, regardless of whether a development application has been lodged.

In all cases, requests must be made in writing to the RFS together with the necessary documentation. If part of a development application then it is to be forwarded by the consent authority to the RFS. This is to ensure data integrity and assist with records management.

¹ Department of Planning and Infrastructure Planning Circular S12-003 Issued 06 June 2012



Seeking advice at the masterplan stage is not mandatory and relevant approval/s under section 100B of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* will still be necessary.

The in principle agreement should be referenced in future development applications.

Information to be included

A bush fire assessment outlining how compliance with *Planning for Bush Fire Protection* can be achieved is required. This assessment is to be prepared by a suitably qualified consultant².

The bush fire assessment should include:

- a description (including the address and aerial photo) of the area to which the masterplan applies,
- a classification of the vegetation on and surrounding the masterplan area (out to a distance of 140 metres from the boundaries of the subject site) in accordance with the system for classification of vegetation contained in *Planning for Bush Fire Protection* (including any unmanaged riparian corridors, drainage areas or areas to be revegetated),

- an assessment of the slope of the land on and surrounding the property (out to a distance of 100 metres from the boundaries of the subject site),
- identification of any significant environmental features on the subject site,
- the extent to which future development can provide for setbacks, including asset protection zones (APZ) based on the proposed use (e.g. residential, special fire protection purpose, commercial), having regard to environmental and topographic constraints. APZ are not to be located within areas that have identified threatened species, endangered ecological communities or riparian corridors as management objectives will conflict,
- Demonstrate that ongoing maintenance of APZ can be achieved without significant enforcement action by authorities, through its design, location and complementary land use strategies (consider locating asset protection zones within individual property boundaries or by infrastructure such as roads, and managed picnic areas),

² NSW RFS Practice Note 1/10 Version 3 February 2012



- the siting and adequacy of water supplies for fire fighting (consider the design of reticulated water supply and the necessity for additional water supplies for fire fighting),
- the capacity of existing and proposed public roads in the vicinity to handle any proposed bush fire maintenance plans and fire emergency procedures for the development site,
- increased volumes of traffic in the event of a bush fire emergency,
- the adequacy of arrangements for access to and egress from the development site for the purposes of an emergency response (consider the provision of perimeter roads),
- an assessment of the extent to which the proposed development conforms with or deviates from the standards, specific objectives and performance criteria set out in Chapter 4 (Performance Based Controls) of *Planning for Bush Fire Protection*.

Subsequent use of bush fire assessment

Given the strategic nature of a masterplan the identification of individual lots and specific bush fire protection measures for each lot is

unlikely. However the bush fire assessment provided with the masterplan can be used to inform subsequent stages in the development assessment process (with updates made to reflect lot specific bush fire protection measures).

Further information

The RFS requirements for different stages of the development assessment process can be found in Practice Note 5/12: Reuse of Rezoning Reports on Bush Fire Prone Land.

For further information contact the NSW RFS on 1300 NSW RFS.

Disclaimer: Any representation, statement opinion, or advice expressed or implied in this publication is made in good faith on the basis that the State of New South Wales, the NSW Rural Fire Service, its agents and employees are not liable (whether by reason of negligence, lack of care or otherwise) to any person for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur in relation to that person taking or not taking (as the case may be) action in respect of any representation, statement or advice referred to above.

