



WALKABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR THE WALKABLE
NEIGHBOURHOODS ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS
IN THE PLANNING REGULATION 2017

Effective 28 September, 2020

Queensland Treasury

Planning Group

INVESTED IN PLANNING FOR YOUR FUTURE



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1.0 Purpose

This document provides supporting information for developers and assessment managers in considering the development assessment benchmarks for walkable neighbourhoods in the Planning Regulation 2017 (the Regulation), Schedule 12A, and their relationship with other supporting tools and guidance material.

2.0 Background

Our planning framework is about ensuring that developing Queensland in a manner that helps create more liveable communities.

We can support the health and wellbeing of our communities by making sure that new residential neighbourhoods are comfortable and convenient for walking and include nearby parks and open space. The design of our neighbourhoods can encourage increased daily physical activity by providing opportunities to make healthy and active choices.

The Regulation requires that new residential neighbourhoods are assessed against benchmarks for the provision of footpaths, street trees, connect street layout, shorter block lengths and proximity to parks. These five residential design elements are recognised by research as contributing to creating supportive environments for improved physical activity and health outcomes.

A suite of guidance material is available to support developers and local government achieve better neighbourhood design and walkable neighbourhoods (see section 5.0).

The relationship between the Regulation, model code and guidance materials is shown in **Figure 1**. Together, this suite of tools provides a valuable resource for local authorities, engineers, planners, designers, practitioners and decision makers involved with planning and design of residential neighbourhoods.



State Planning Policy (SPP)

- Statutory instrument
- SPP states 17 state interests in land use planning and development, including ‘liveable communities’ whereby ‘liveable, well designed and serviced communities are delivered to support wellbeing and enhance quality of life’.
- SPP policies must be integrated in local government planning schemes as locally appropriate.
- Planning Minister may rely on the state interests to call in a development application (Minister’s call in).



Walkable Neighbourhoods Assessment benchmarks in the Planning Regulation 2017

- The new provisions are in Schedule 12A of the Planning Regulation 2017.
- New residential development must be assessed against ‘assessment benchmarks’ (i.e. criteria and outcomes that must be delivered).
- Development must demonstrate it can meet criteria, allowing for site-specific considerations.
- Provides clarity of the standards and outcomes we want to see demonstrated by new development.



Model Code for Neighbourhood Design – a code for reconfiguring a lot

- Voluntary code provisions.
- Code provisions to ensure planning scheme achieve well designed residential developments.
- Voluntary: applies in development assessment if local government chooses to include in schemes.
- Can be amended to suit local context.



Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australasia Queensland (IPWEAQ) Street Design Manual Walkable Neighbourhood 2020

- Leading practice technical guidance and neighbourhood design principles.
- leading practice guidance (step-by-step considerations) and technical design criteria for residential streets.
- Engineering drawings and standards.



Walkability Improvement Tool for Built Environment Professionals

- Provides a methodology to use to identify and prioritise walkability improvements in existing neighbourhoods.
- Offers a systematic approach to determine how pedestrian-friendly an existing residential neighbourhood is. It also provides guidance on how to achieve a cost-effective approach to implementing improvements as, and when, funding becomes available.



Supporting information for walkable neighbourhoods

- Provides supporting information for developers and assessment managers in considering the development assessment benchmarks for walkable neighbourhoods in Schedule 12A of the Planning Regulation 2017, and their relationship with other supporting tools and guidance material.
- Includes information on how the Regulation affects plan-making, local government infrastructure plan and development assessment.

Figure 1: The relationship between the Regulation, model code and guidance materials

3.0 The Regulation provisions

On 28 September 2020, new provisions in the Regulation took effect which impact certain development applications for reconfiguring a lot.

The objective of the provisions is to ensure new residential neighbourhoods are designed to support convenient and comfortable walking for transport, leisure, recreation and exercise.

Developers and local government must now consider how neighbourhoods are designed for walking when preparing and assessing subdivision development proposals for new residential neighbourhoods.

The new assessment benchmarks contained in schedule 12A of the Regulation, apply to residential subdivisions in certain residential zones (except rural residential zones), where at least one road is created or extended.

The assessment manager must assess the development application for the residential subdivision against the assessment benchmarks summarised briefly below:

- connectivity for pedestrians is provided through a grid-like street layout responding to the local landscape
- block lengths are a maximum of 250 metres
- footpaths are provided on at least one side of local neighbourhood roads and on both sides of main streets
- provision of at least one street tree every 15 metres on both sides of all streets
- blocks are within 400 metres of a park or open space to the extent topography and other physical constraints reasonably permit

The Regulation provides that the purpose of these assessment benchmarks is to ensure the reconfiguration supports convenient and comfortable walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise in the locality of the lot.

3.1 How the Regulation affects plan-making

Local governments do not need to amend their local planning instruments to reflect the assessment benchmarks in schedule 12A of the Regulation.

A local categorising instrument, such as a planning scheme, may include a purpose or outcome that is the same, or similar to the purpose stated in schedule 12A of the Regulation (i.e. ensuring reconfiguration of a lot supports comfortable and convenient walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise), and include assessment benchmarks relating to that purpose. These guidelines acknowledge that many progressive local government planning schemes already meet or exceed the assessment benchmarks in schedule 12A of the Regulation.

Such assessment benchmarks in a local categorising instrument do not need to be limited to street layout, block lengths, street trees, footpaths, parks and open space. They may include other requirements to achieve the purpose, such as street parking or mid-block links for example, which will apply in development assessment where relevant.

However, if the assessment benchmarks in a local categorising instrument relate to the assessment benchmarks in Schedule 12A, these cannot be inconsistent with the Schedule 12A benchmarks. The Regulation provides the circumstances where the local categorising instrument may apply instead of schedule 12A benchmarks, for example, if the rate of street tree provision exceeds the requirements under Schedule 12A.

3.2 How the Regulation affects Local Government Infrastructure Plans

There are no changes to the processes for making or amending of Local Government Infrastructure Plans (LGIPs) or local government's ability to provide desired standards of service for trunk infrastructure as a result of the new provisions.

As with any development application, the assessment manager must assess the development proposal against all the matters prescribed in the Planning Regulation to the extent relevant, for example, assessment against the LGIP as well as the assessment benchmarks in schedule 12A.

The assessment benchmarks in schedule 12A are not desired standards of service. They are strategic planning outcomes intended to be considered in the design and layout of proposed residential subdivisions.

It is also accepted, given the wide range of circumstances encountered by local government's across Queensland that allowances for local circumstances will need to be made by the assessment manager.

3.3 How the Regulation affects development assessment

The changes to the Regulation require that a development application for reconfiguring a lot must be assessed against the new assessment benchmarks where, in summary:

- the reconfiguration is the subdivision of a lot into two or more lots
- any part of the lot being reconfigured is in a residential zone (except a rural residential zone so it does not apply to subdivisions that create acreage lots), Emerging community zone or Mixed use zone
- at least one of the created lots is intended mainly for a residential purpose; and
- the reconfiguration is associated with the construction or extension of a road.

These assessment benchmarks apply to any development for reconfiguring a lot that requires code or impact assessment under the planning scheme or Regulation, and to variation applications lodged on or after 28 September 2020.

The five assessment benchmarks provide for five design elements:

- connectivity for pedestrians is provided through a grid-like street layout responding to the local landscape
- block lengths are a maximum of 250 metres
- footpaths are provided on at least one side of local neighbourhood roads and on both sides of main streets
- provision of at least one street tree every 15 metres on both sides of all streets
- blocks are within 400 metres of a park or open space to the extent topography and other physical constraints reasonably permit

These assessment benchmarks are discussed in detail below.

The *Planning Act 2016* provides for how an assessment manager is to carry out the assessment of a development application. The assessment manager has the discretion to approve a development application, with or without conditions, even if the proposed development does not comply with some of the assessment benchmarks. An assessment manager may elaborate on this reasoning in its statement of reasons, which is part of the decision notice.

This approach recognises that each site is different and provides that the assessment manager and the developer can work together to achieve meaningful outcomes that deliver on the intent of the assessment benchmarks.

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



PURPOSE

To ensure the reconfiguration supports convenient and comfortable walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise in the locality of the lot.

REGULATION ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

See Schedule 12A of the Regulation

The reconfiguration provides connectivity for pedestrians by—

- (a) *ensuring that any roads constructed or extended in association with the reconfiguration are connected in a grid-like pattern that is responsive to topography and other physical constraints; and*
- (b) *ensuring that, to the extent topography and other physical constraints reasonably permit, any roads constructed or extended in association with the reconfiguration, or footpaths provided in relation to the reconfiguration—*
 - (i) *connect to roads and footpaths in surrounding areas; or*
 - (ii) *allow for connection to future roads and footpaths in surrounding areas.*

DETAILS

Grid-like pattern

Connected streets and footpaths encourage walking and make neighbourhoods easier to navigate. This connectivity assessment benchmark requires any new or extended roads and footpaths associated with new residential subdivisions to be connected in a grid-like pattern and connect to the roads and footpaths in the surrounding area. These benchmarks do not apply to a laneway or a bicycle lane.

The grid-like network allows for easy navigation, the ability to ‘walk around the block’ or within or between neighbourhoods. A grid-like network does not need to be the iconic straight lines and 90-degree angles. A grid-like pattern can have diversity in the street layout, responding to topography and natural features. The provision recognises that providing a connection to surrounding roads may not always be appropriate or possible due to topography and other physical constraints. This is a matter for the assessment manager’s discretion.

Grid-like streets don’t have to mean increased speed and unsafe streets. There are many effective street calming design solutions that manage through traffic and provide clear signals to drivers they are in a residential area.

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



DETAILS

The Model Code for Neighbourhood Design (model code) and Institute of Public Works and Engineering Australasia Queensland (IPWEAQ) Street Design Manual: Walkable Neighbourhood 2020 (IPWEAQ Street Design Manual) provide examples of best practice guidance and additional assessment benchmarks for achieving connectivity for pedestrians, such as when and how to include laneways and providing safe crossing for pedestrians. The IPWEAQ Street Design Manual provides technical standards for intersections and crossings for pedestrians, which the model code refers to.

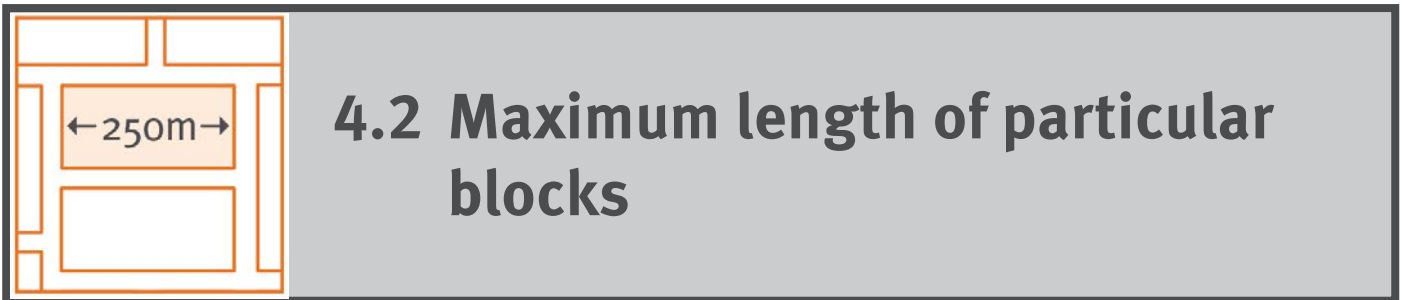
Cul-de-sacs

The provisions do not prohibit the use of dead end' or cul-de-sac streets. It is recognised there may be circumstances where connectivity may not be appropriate.

The model code includes an example of provisions a local government planning scheme code could set for determining if a cul-de-sac is an appropriate design outcome (see PO6 in the model code).

This could be where the design is being responsive to topography and other physical constraints (such as environmental corridors) or involves balance landlocked infill sites that are unable to create a through-connection. Local government may use this model code as a starting point and tailor the provisions to suit their local area. Section 2.7 in Part 1 of IPWEAQ Street Design Manual provides some best practice guidance on how to design cul-de-sacs.

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



4.2 Maximum length of particular blocks

PURPOSE

To ensure the reconfiguration supports convenient and comfortable walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise in the locality of the lot.

REGULATION ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

See Schedule 12A of the Regulation

- (1) *The reconfiguration provides for convenient pedestrian movement by ensuring the length of each boundary of a block for the reconfiguration does not exceed the lesser of—*
 - (a) *a maximum length for a boundary of a block stated in a local assessment benchmark for the reconfiguration; or*
 - (b) *250m.*
- (2) *Subsection (1) does not apply in relation to a block for the reconfiguration that the development application for the reconfiguration states will be subdivided as part of a future stage of development.*

DETAILS

250m block length or less

To ensure the reconfiguration provides for convenient pedestrian movement, the assessment benchmarks set a maximum block length of 250m unless the local government's planning scheme requires for a lesser maximum length.

The assessment benchmark is reflective of block design practices and represents a maximum block perimeter between 500 and 600 metres, which is a comfortable five minute walk around the block.

It is recognised that a development application for reconfiguring a lot may also create and identify lots for future stages of development. The Regulation provides that blocks are limited to a 250 metre maximum length, however created lots identified in the development application for future subdivisions (balance lots) are not limited in length. These balance lots will be subject to the requirements if a subsequent approval is sought for reconfiguring the balance lot.

Measuring a block

A block may be bounded by road, parks and open space or a range of other constraints, consequently, the Regulation has not prescribed how the 250 metre block distance is to be measured.

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



DETAILS

If the block is bounded by road on each side, the length of a block is to be measured from centerline to centreline of the road, which is consistent with engineering standards in road standards. The IPWEAQ Street Design Manual provides guidance on measuring maximum lengths for different types of streets, and examples of variations to reflect best practice design advice.

Mid-block pedestrian links

The Regulation does not require the provision of mid-block pedestrian links. Mid-block pedestrian links can be a useful design tool to assist in achieving a legible, connected pedestrian layout and would be encouraged as best practice. These are best considered based upon the specifics of the proposed design, mix of uses and locations of existing or proposed public transport stops – where there are natural pedestrian desire lines.

The model code include example provisions requiring street blocks to provide a mid-block path for pedestrian and cyclist movement (PO6). The model code also refers to the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Guidelines for design guidance.

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



4.3 Street trees

PURPOSE

To ensure the reconfiguration supports convenient and comfortable walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise in the locality of the lot.

REGULATION ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

See Schedule 21 of the Regulation

The reconfiguration provides shade for comfortable walking by—

- (a) if a local assessment benchmark for the reconfiguration requires the planting of more than 1 tree per 15m on each side of a new road—complying with the local assessment benchmark; or*
- (b) otherwise—ensuring at least 1 tree is planted per 15m on each side of a new road.*

DETAILS

Shade street trees

The provision of shade alongside roads to encourage walking is important given Queensland's climate. Research indicates the more street trees along the footpath network, the more likely residents are to walk for 60 minutes each week (Hooper 2015).

The assessment benchmark for street trees is that at least one street tree is provided every 15 metres on each side of a new road. This approach is intended to allow some flexibility with how street trees are provided, recognising that the verge is a competitive space, particularly for smaller lot frontages.

A local categorising instrument may include a higher rate of street tree provision, for example, one tree every five metres.

Planting in the verge

The verge, the space between the property boundary and the carriageway, must allow for a multitude of functions including street trees and planting. The residential street section of part 2 of the IPWEAQ Street Design Manual provides guidance and best practice tips on designing for trees to ensure compatibility with allotment crossovers, street lighting, and service crossings.

Placement and type of trees

Local governments are best placed to determine appropriate placement, size and species of the shade trees responsive to the local climate and character of the area. Local governments often have planning scheme policies that outline appropriate street tree species and size.

When in doubt, the local governments is reminded that the ultimate design purpose of this provision is to support convenient and comfortable walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise in the locality of the lot.

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



4.4 Footpaths

PURPOSE	To ensure the reconfiguration supports convenient and comfortable walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise in the locality of the lot.
REGULATION ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS	<p>See Schedule 12A of the Regulation</p> <p><i>The reconfiguration provides for convenient and comfortable pedestrian movement by ensuring—</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) <i>for a new road used mainly for providing direct access to a created lot—a footpath is constructed—</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) <i>if a local assessment benchmark for the reconfiguration requires the construction of a footpath on both sides of the new road—on both sides of the road; or</i> (ii) <i>otherwise—on at least 1 side of the new road; or</i> (b) <i>for another new road—a footpath is constructed on both sides of the road.</i>
DETAILS	<p>The assessment benchmarks establish which streets require two footpaths and which streets require a single footpath.</p> <p>Streets with one footpath</p> <p>The Regulation does not prescribe a road hierarchy. Each local government will have its own road hierarchy and associated standards to determine which roads are relevant in applying these assessment benchmarks.</p> <p>One footpath is required if the road is a local road, that is a lower order road (which mainly provides for direct access to a created lot). The location of the footpath should also be planned to achieve connectivity with other footpaths in the area.</p> <p>For example, under the IPWEAQ Street Design Manual, a local street and a local access street generally services only vehicle traffic for the street but allows necessary connections for pedestrians and cyclists. In using these typographies, a new local street and a new local access street would be required to provide one footpath.</p> <p>Note that these assessment benchmarks do not apply to a laneway. This is because a laneway generally provides a shared function for pedestrians and cyclists and does not need to provide a dedicated footpath.</p> <p>Streets with footpaths on both sides</p> <p>Footpaths are required on both sides of higher order roads, where the main function is not providing direct access to a created lot.</p> <p>For example, if using IPWEAQ Street Design Manual street typographies, major collector, collector and access streets would need to include pedestrian footpaths on both sides of the street.</p>

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



4.5 Parks and other areas of open space

PURPOSE

To ensure the reconfiguration supports convenient and comfortable walking for transport, recreation, leisure and exercise in the locality of the lot.

REGULATION ASSESSMENT BENCHMARKS

See Schedule 12A of the Regulation

- (1) *The reconfiguration ensures access to areas for recreation, leisure or exercise by ensuring that, to the extent topography and other physical constraints reasonably permit, a part of each block for the reconfiguration is within 400m of a park or another area of open space that is accessible to the public.*
- (2) *In this section— park includes—*
 - (a) *an existing park; and*
 - (b) *a park, to be provided under a development approval, if development of the park has started; and*
 - (c) *land identified as a park in a local planning instrument; and*
 - (d) *land identified in an LGIP for public park infrastructure.*

DETAILS

Parks

A ‘park’ is defined at schedule 24 of the Regulation, which has not been amended. The Regulation continues to provide that a development proposal may include a park that is not identified in an LGIP for a Priority Infrastructure Area, or a park identified in another local planning instrument.

The proposed park may also include a park that is already constructed or under construction, noting that where there is a commitment to a funded or approved future park, these are also relevant considerations that can be factored into assessments. A proposed park may refer to any of the types of park defined for this assessment benchmark.

Areas of open space

This assessment benchmark distinguishes a ‘park’ from another area of ‘open space’. An area of open space includes green and open spaces that may not have embellishments but are publicly accessible and usable for the community. This is reflective of the benefits that come from providing community access to a diverse range of parks, nature and open space.

Areas of publicly open space may be multifunctional and include natural areas and linkages, foreshore areas, waterway corridor, informal parkland, sports grounds and courts, formal gardens and linear walking, cycling, and equestrian tracks. An area of open space would not include a backyard, car park or sport, private recreation and leisure facility requiring a fee or an organised event for their use.

4.0 The five assessment benchmarks



4.5 Parks and other areas of open space

DETAILS

Measuring 400m distance

The focus of this benchmark is ensuring that parks and areas of open space are provided within a comfortable walking distance.

This distance is to be calculated from a boundary of any part of a block to the edge of a park or other open space area as radial distance, not walking distance.

The Regulation provides that a park or area of open space is provided within 400 metres if permitted by topography and other physical constraints. This provides some flexibility so that individual assessments can still factor in site specific scenarios where the 400 metre radial distance is separated by a pedestrian barrier (i.e. a major highway, rail line, river or other topographical feature), to achieve a reasonable walking distance to a park.

Park size and embellishments

The Regulation does not prescribe sizes or embellishments for parks and open space. An LGIP may include these requirements in its desired standards of service for parks. However, not all proposed parks will be an 'LGIP park' identified for the Priority Infrastructure Area in a local government area.

Areas of 'open space' are not development infrastructure addressed by an LGIP. The developer and assessment manager may work together to achieve meaningful outcomes that deliver on the intent of the assessment benchmarks. The IPWEAQ Street Design Manual: Walkable Neighbourhoods 2020 provides guidance on these matters.

5.0 Supporting guidance

5.1 Model code for neighbourhood design

[The Model code for neighbourhood design – a code for reconfiguring a lot](#) has been developed to assist local government to address aspects of the Liveable communities state interest of the State Planning Policy 2017 (SPP) by providing a contemporary set of standards that can be used by local government to assist in integrating the state interest.

The model code is a set of example provisions which supports healthy and active communities and promote the creation of walkable neighbourhoods. The code provides best practice neighbourhood design, to assist local government and developers in facilitating these outcomes across the State at reconfiguration of a lot stage.

The model code has been structured in a traditional format, comprising purpose, overall outcomes, performance outcomes and acceptable outcomes. It is not mandatory that assessment benchmarks be articulated in this format in a planning scheme.

It is up to a local government to choose if they wish to apply the model code. Local government may choose to adopt any part of the model code by integrating these provisions into their planning scheme, including existing planning scheme codes, for example, into an existing overlay or zone code.

5.2 Street Design Manual (Walkable Neighbourhoods)

[IPWEAQ's Street Design Manual: Walkable Neighbourhoods 2020](#) is a contemporary guide for the design and development of Queensland's residential neighbourhoods.

The Street Design Manual complements the Queensland Government's Model Code for neighbourhood design and other policy initiatives which offer technical design criteria for residential streets. It builds on previous IPWEAQ publications, Queensland Streets and Complete Streets, and draws material from Economic Development Queensland guidelines and relevant codes.

The Manual has been developed for use by engineers, designers, practitioners, stakeholders and decision makers involved with design and planning.

5.3 Walkability Improvement Tool

[The Walkability Improvement Tool for Built Environment Professionals](#) provides a methodology to identify and prioritise walkability improvements in existing neighbourhoods. The tool offers a systematic approach to determine how pedestrian-friendly an existing residential neighbourhood is. It also provides guidance on how to achieve a cost-effective approach to implementing improvements as, and when, funding becomes available.



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