

Great suburbs need great schools

A guide for locating small schools

Overview

This is a guide to assist with the identification of Brisbane site locations for small, specialist or independent schools that are privately owned and operated. It identifies relevant information considered by Council in *Brisbane City Plan 2014* (City Plan) in guiding and assessing development. How does City Plan define a school?

Under City Plan, a school would fall within the defined use of 'Educational establishment', which includes pre-preparatory, preparatory, primary school, secondary school, special education, college, university, technical institutes and outdoor education centres. Childcare centres are not included in this definition. City Plan has no definition for a 'small' school, however as a guide Council generally considers this to be less than 50 students. The same criteria are used to assess all school proposals regardless of size, however some potential impacts such as traffic and noise are more likely to be an issue in the case of larger facilities.

Where should a school be located?

City Plan generally anticipates the location of Educational establishments in zones including centre, mixed use, community facilities (education purposes zone precinct) and Specialised centre (major education and research facility zone precinct). A neighbourhood plan, overlay or other local planning requirement may also impact site suitability. For more information, visit cityplan.brisbane.qld.gov.au/eplan.

As an Educational establishment can impact the amenity of its surrounding neighbourhood, to determine suitable sites for a small school it is important to consider facts and circumstances, including:

- whether the location, design of buildings and landscaping is consistent with [subtropical design principles](#) and provides a high level of amenity for students and neighbouring residents
- constraints such as (but not limited to) flooding, bushfire, site contamination, poor air quality or noise impacts that should be avoided or managed
- reasonable expectations of the surrounding community, including potential for early engagement
- safety, accessibility requirements and needs of residents travelling to, from and near the site
- impacts to existing or future infrastructure required to service the development
- proximity to other community uses and facilities to support a cohesive and walkable neighbourhood
- traffic, access, parking and servicing requirements to support the function and operation of the proposed school.

Do I need development approval?

Expansion of an existing or new Educational establishment may require lodgement of a development application for Council assessment against City Plan assessment benchmarks.

Assessment benchmarks are dependent on the proposed development and will determine if a development application is required and what Council is required to assess.

Among its considerations, Council will assess all material provided with the development application, any submissions made in relation to the proposed development, and any existing development approval for, or lawful use of, the land or adjacent land in the context of relevant City Plan provisions. These provisions may include:

- site zone
- neighbourhood plan code
- overlays codes
- development codes (use codes and other development codes).

Development approval can be sought for a school in any location, regardless of zoning, however may require a higher level of assessment if the zone is not generally intended for this type of use. Certain locations such as environmental zoned areas are unlikely to be suitable and are best avoided.

You can learn about the zones, neighbourhood plans and overlays affecting a site through an address search in [City Plan online](#), or by phoning Council on 07 3403 8888 and asking to speak with a Planning Information Officer.

Depending on circumstances, a development application may be referred to other agencies for assessment, such as the [State Assessment and Referral Agency](#).

City Plan is a technical document used by Council to assess new development (or an expansion of an existing development). While Council aims to assist you through the process, you may wish to seek your own legal advice and to engage a town planner or other appropriately qualified professional for help with your building or development project.

Do I need building approval?

Licensed private building certifiers or building consultants can provide advice regarding building work for an existing or new school and whether [building approval](#) is required. These licensed professionals can be found through the [Queensland Building and Construction Commission](#).

Depending on the circumstances, building approval applications may also require referral to Council for assessment (e.g. [building near a boundary](#)) or a development application may be required for assessable building works (e.g. [demolition of a pre-1947 dwelling house](#)).

What other approvals may be required?

In addition to City Plan requirements, Educational establishments such as small schools will also need to comply with all relevant Queensland Government legislation, such as the *Education (General Provisions) Act 2006*.

For further information, visit:

- [Queensland Department of Education](#)
- [Queensland School Site Selection Guide](#)
- [Queensland Catholic Education Commission](#)
- [Independent Schools Queensland](#).

Additional Council support for non-profit organisations

In 2013, Council established the *Inclusive Brisbane Professional Advice Alliance* (Alliance) to provide pro bono high-level advice on organisational sustainability, development and infrastructure issues that may be relevant to non-profit organisations. The Alliance supports community, social enterprise and not-for-profit organisations by providing access to [free professional advice](#) to assist with their growth and sustainability.

Council [grants](#) for community groups and non-profit organisations support improved social services and facilities. Council may also provide eligible religious and charitable organisations with a discount on [building and development application fees](#).

Next steps

Before proceeding, you may wish to contact the Manager Neighbourhood Planning on 07 3178 5142 to discuss opportunities across the city.

Information in this guide is general only as all Council development and building application assessments are site specific. You can also contact Council on 07 3403 8888 and ask to speak to a Planning Information Officer to determine if your project needs a development application. Council also offers a range of [prelodgement services](#), including a preliminary discussion, pre-lodgement meeting or pre-purchase meeting, and detailed technical advice.

Disclaimer: This guide provides general information and has been prepared to assist the reader to understand City Plan. It does not form a relevant matter for development assessment, and it is not intended to express opinions on specific matters or circumstances. For full detail about the local planning scheme, Brisbane City Plan 2014, visit [City Plan online](#).