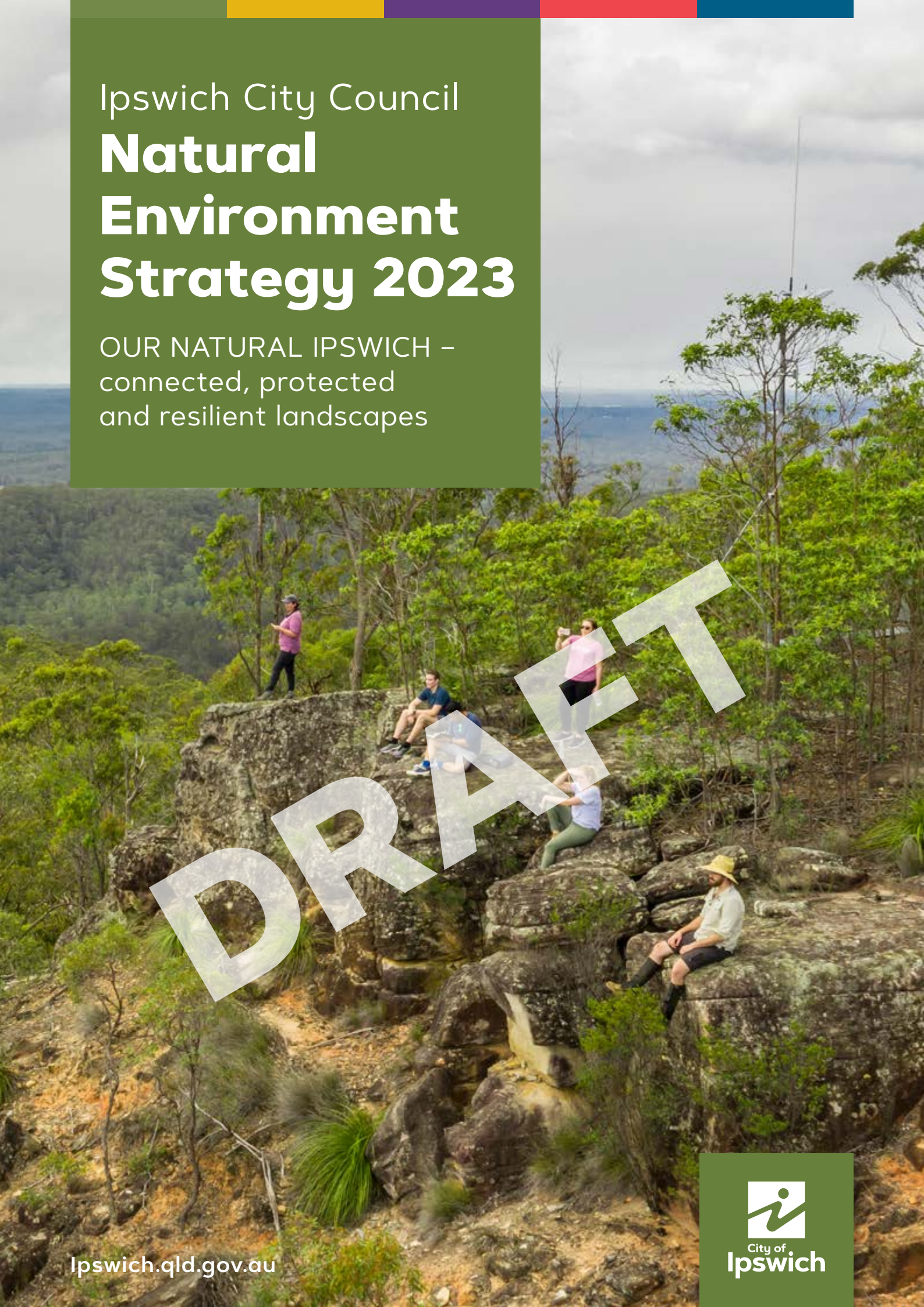
Ipswich City Council

Natural Environment Strategy 2023

OUR NATURAL IPSWICH – connected, protected and resilient landscapes



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City of Ipswich

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Trails across Ipswich and beyond traverse the cultural landscape of the Traditional Owners. Ipswich City has cultural significance for the Traditional Owners who have always had and have maintained a spiritual connection with their country. This relationship remains strong and important to the people today.

Ipswich City Council recognises and respects the connection between Traditional Owners and their country.

INTRODUCTION

What do we mean by Ipswich's natural environment?

The natural environment is defined as a collective term used to describe the diverse land and water ecosystems that make up the city's habitat network. The natural environment includes:

- habitat for iconic, significant and threatened species
- vegetated spaces providing refuge for wildlife
- corridors of natural areas providing connectivity for wildlife and people
- biological diversity, natural capital and ecosystem services
- waterways, wetlands, riparian and aquatic ecosystems and floodplains
- healthy soils and productive lands
- Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape features
- recreation and scenic amenity.

Photo comp entrant: Want G, Grasstree Sunset, Queens Park

These natural areas are spread across the region, crossing rural and urban lands which are both privately and publicly owned and managed (Figure 1).

Photo courtesy: Hepburn L, Gone Fishing, Armstrong Park

This strategy provides the overarching strategic direction for the natural environment across Ipswich which considers waterways and wetlands, biodiversity and threatened species, Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape values, urban and rural biodiversity, and sustainable nature-based recreation. It will guide the delivery and co-ordination of actions and activities undertaken across different council programs which influence the natural environment.

Natural Environment Strategy

Waterways and wetlands	Biodiversity and threatened species	Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape values	Urban biodiversity	Rural biodiversity	Sustainable nature-based recreation

This document should be read in conjunction with the *Natural Environment Strategy 2022 – Background Report* which provides additional information on the natural environment values, threats and best practice management approaches.

Why is it important?

Ipswich's natural environment is recognised as critically vital to the viability and liveability of the city due to the many ecosystem services it provides including:

- providing habitat to a diversity of native flora and fauna
- supporting the lifestyle and health of the Ipswich community
- improving air and water quality
- providing carbon sequestration and storage
- regulating temperatures and flooding impacts
- providing landscape amenity and enhancing land values
- attracting tourists and increasing economic development
- enabling continued cultural and spiritual connection and ongoing cultural practices by the Traditional Owner community.

IPSWICH'S DIVERSE NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES INCLUDES:

46
rare and threatened species of fauna and flora

Over
11,000km
of waterways

219
nature reserves maintained

21%
remnant vegetation cover across the Local Government Area

6,646ha
of conservation estates

Over
2,000
recorded species of native plants and animals

Over
7,000ha
of natural areas owned and/or managed by council

A study in 2011 found that avoiding further decline in SEQ waterways over 20 years could save approximately **$2 billion**[1]

A study in 2012 identified SEQ households were willing to pay almost **$11,000** for one-step improvement in local ecosystem diversity[2]

1 Binney, J. & James, D. (2011). Sharing the load: a collaborative approach to investing in South East Queensland's Waterways. Mainstream Economics

2 2012–10: Valuing ecosystem diversity in South East Queensland: A life satisfaction approach (Working paper) Author Ambrey, Christopher L., Fleming, Christopher M.

Figure 1 – Map of Ipswich's natural environment features

Hillview Drive Reserve
Linking land and river habitat

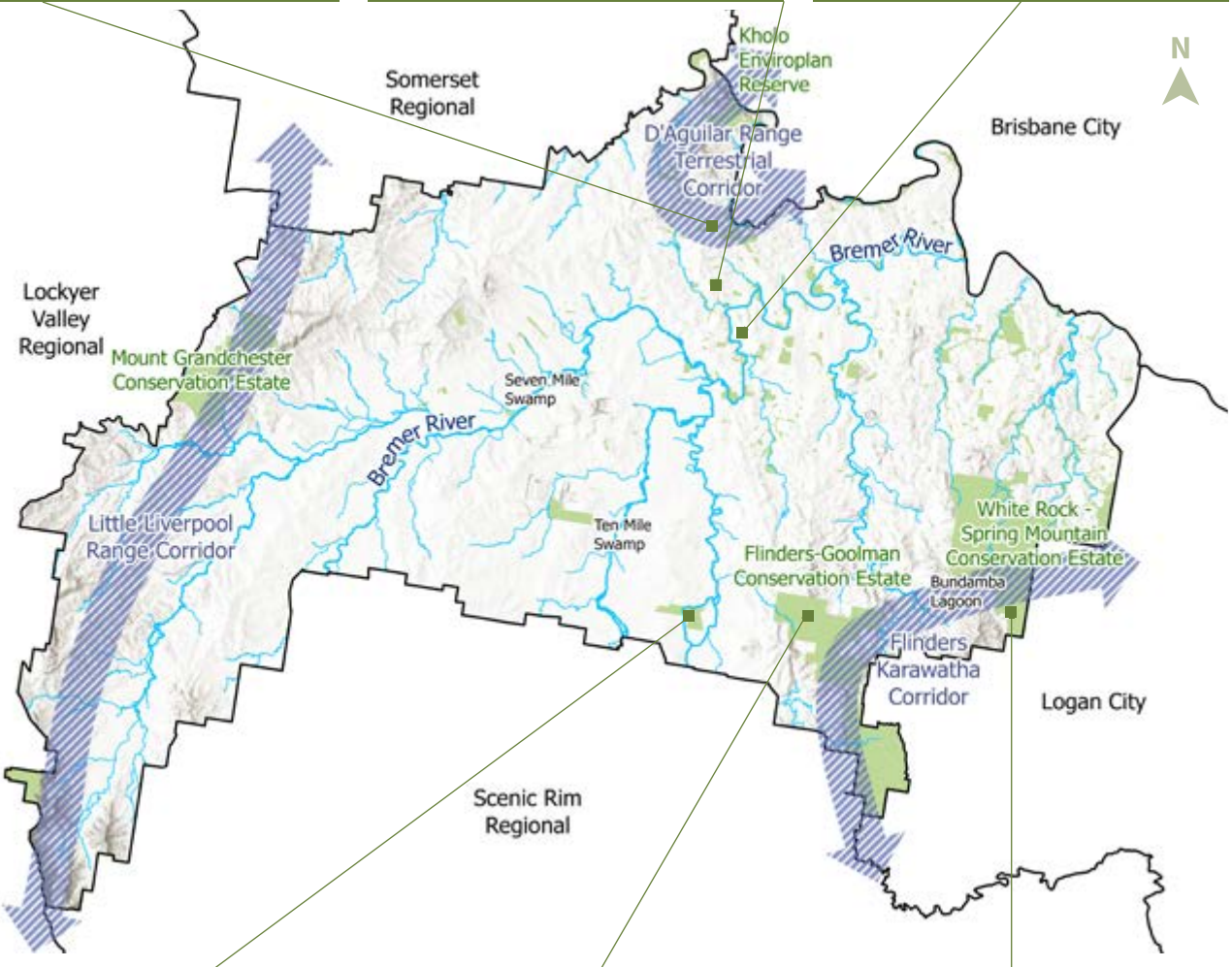
A predominately dry eucalypt forest with a rainforest gully, visitors can enjoy this natural environment through a 6.5km mountain bike trail which is also suitable for bushwalking.

Pteropus Conservation Park
Home to Ipswich's flying fox colony

Commonly known as Woodend Nature Centre, this conservation area is home to a flying fox colony and has been featured on the BBC and David Attenborough's 'Life on Earth' series.

Denmark Hill Conservation Reserve
City views amongst natural wonders

A natural wonderland in the heart of the city, visitors can take in panoramic views of the city and explore a number of walking circuits through idyllic native bushland, with part of the walking trails following the former coal-skip tramway.



Purga Nature Reserve
The largest protected Swamp Tea-Tree forest

Photo comp entrant: L Oliver, Swamp Tea Trees, Purga Reserve

This Reserve is a 140 hectare tract of Swamp Tea-tree, flood plains and wetlands. The reserve is an important habitat for the region's Koala and Wallaby populations and the critically endangered Swamp Tea-Tree forest.

Flinders - Goolman Conservation Estate
Ipswich's highest peak

Rugged volcanic peaks and steep slopes of this 2,250 hectare estate make this a unique and breathtaking landscape.

White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation Estate
Home of the sacred White Rock

Photo comp entrant: Smith K, Rock Faces, White Rock Cons Park

Spanning over 2,500 hectares, White Rock - Spring Mountain features unique rocky outcrops and lookout points with views stretching as far as Stradbroke Island.

Importance of the natural environment to the Ipswich community

The following is a summary of the outcomes from the engagement undertaken for both the *Natural Environment Policy* (2021) and *Natural Environment Strategy* (2022).

200+ participants

Shapeyouripswich.com.au, community panel and external stakeholder workshops

What's great about **Ipswich's natural environment?**

1. **Extent of green space and natural areas**
2. **Amount of biodiversity, wildlife and habitat**
3. **Its rivers and waterways**

What are your favourite **natural environment areas?**

1. **White Rock and White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation Estate**

2. **Flinders Peak and Flinders - Goolman Conservation Estate**

3. **Bremer River**

Key threats

The ability of the natural environment across Ipswich to continue to deliver these services is under threat from key city pressures including:

- **Population growth and urbanisation** – Ipswich has the fastest population growth rate in Queensland which requires new housing, employment and other supporting facilities and infrastructure to be developed. This places pressure on the natural environment due to vegetation clearing, landscape fragmentation, changed flow conditions, increased pollutant loads and introduced animals and plants.
- **Climate change** – the region is also experiencing a changing climate with expected increased temperatures, longer drought periods, more frequent floods and harsher fire-weather climates. These changes are placing additional pressure on Ipswich's native plants and animals.
- **Land management and planning** – inappropriate planning and land management practices can result in vegetation loss, introduction of pest plants and animals and degraded natural, cultural and water landscapes.

Now is a critical point in time to protect and restore Ipswich's natural environmental values to build its resilience to future threats associated with urbanisation and climate change. A sharpening of priority outcomes and a step-change in approaches is needed and is the key focus of this strategy.

What do we want to achieve?

A connected and protected natural environment landscape is critical to preserve and restore resilient populations of native species which are under threat from existing and future impacts.

The Natural Environment Strategy identifies priority objectives and approaches to conserve and protect values and restore ecosystems to achieve more resilient landscapes.

Importantly, this strategy describes how the different themes can be delivered in an integrated manner to optimise the benefits achieved from investment decisions. It also recognises that these outcomes cannot be achieved by council alone and that partnerships and education will be critical.

This strategy has been developed to guide the delivery of a protected, connected and resilient natural environment landscape across Ipswich.

What role can we all play?

Council's core role

The protection and restoration of the natural environment is achieved through council's core functions including:

- strategic land use planning and development assessments
- regulation of environmental risk
- acquisition and management of priority natural areas
- construction and maintenance of public infrastructure/areas
- supporting others to protect and restore the natural environment (e.g. landholder support programs, environmental education and natural resource management).

The role of others

Council recognises the important role that others play in the protection and restoration of Ipswich's natural environment. This includes Federal and State Government agencies, NRM groups, local community and businesses.

1 Waterways and wetland health improvement

Improving the health and resilience of Ipswich's waterways and wetlands by focusing on reducing sediment loads and improving riparian vegetation condition.

Ipswich contains a diversity of waterway and wetland environments which includes rivers, creeks, streams, watercourses, lagoons, swamps, low-lying areas, floodplains, and adjacent riparian vegetation. These waterway and wetland environments support many native plants and animals as well as help to sustain our way of life, playing a key role in water supply and conveyance, providing opportunities for recreation, urban amenity and cooling.

Most waterways in Ipswich have been significantly modified or altered from the pre-European state. Very few waterways still have the natural features, biodiversity and ecosystem functions to be considered in a 'healthy natural state'. Key threats to Ipswich waterways include riparian vegetation loss, loss of floodplain wetlands, changes in water quality and flow conditions, creation of fish barriers and pest plants and animals. Council's *Waterway Health Strategy 2020* provides more detail on the current condition, key threats and priority actions required across Ipswich's waterway catchments to improve waterway and wetland health.

Sediment loads and degraded riparian zone vegetation are key issues for the health of Ipswich waterways and are a key focus for this strategy. The main sources of sediment entering waterways in Ipswich are from erosion from building/construction sites and from cleared or poorly managed agricultural land. The condition and extent of riparian zones are being impacted by clearing of vegetation and invasion by exotic grasses and woody weed species.

Photo comp entrant: A Brimecombe, Swanbank

Increased sediment loads likely due to climate change

Increased frequency and intensity of rainfall events due to climate change are likely to increase the risk and impact of erosion and sedimentation across the catchments of Ipswich.

Priority objective 1: Reduce sediment entering our waterways and wetlands

Indicator: *Sediment load reduction (kg/yr) due to council led projects.*

Current state	339,090kg/yr of sediment removed to-date through stormwater offsets projects
Milestone	342,000kg/yr reduction in sediment loads entering waterways and wetlands across Ipswich
Strategy target	345,000kg/yr reduction in sediment loads entering waterways and wetlands across Ipswich

Approach to be taken

To reduce the amount of sediment entering waterways and wetlands, council will take a catchment wide approach to support works across urban and rural landscapes using the following approaches:

- **Urban sediment control:**
  - improved erosion and sediment control on new urban developments and projects
  - stormwater management in new and existing urban areas to control catchment stormwater quality, flow volumes and velocities in new development areas.
- **Rural landscape stabilisation:**
  - supporting landholders to improve land management practices to reduce soil erosion and loss
  - stabilising rural stream banks in high erosion risk areas.

Priority objective 2: Increase extent and condition of vegetation cover around waterways

Indicator: *Riparian extent as measured by the Healthy Land and Water report card. This will be supplemented in the future with council mapping and data of riparian extent and condition as data becomes available.*

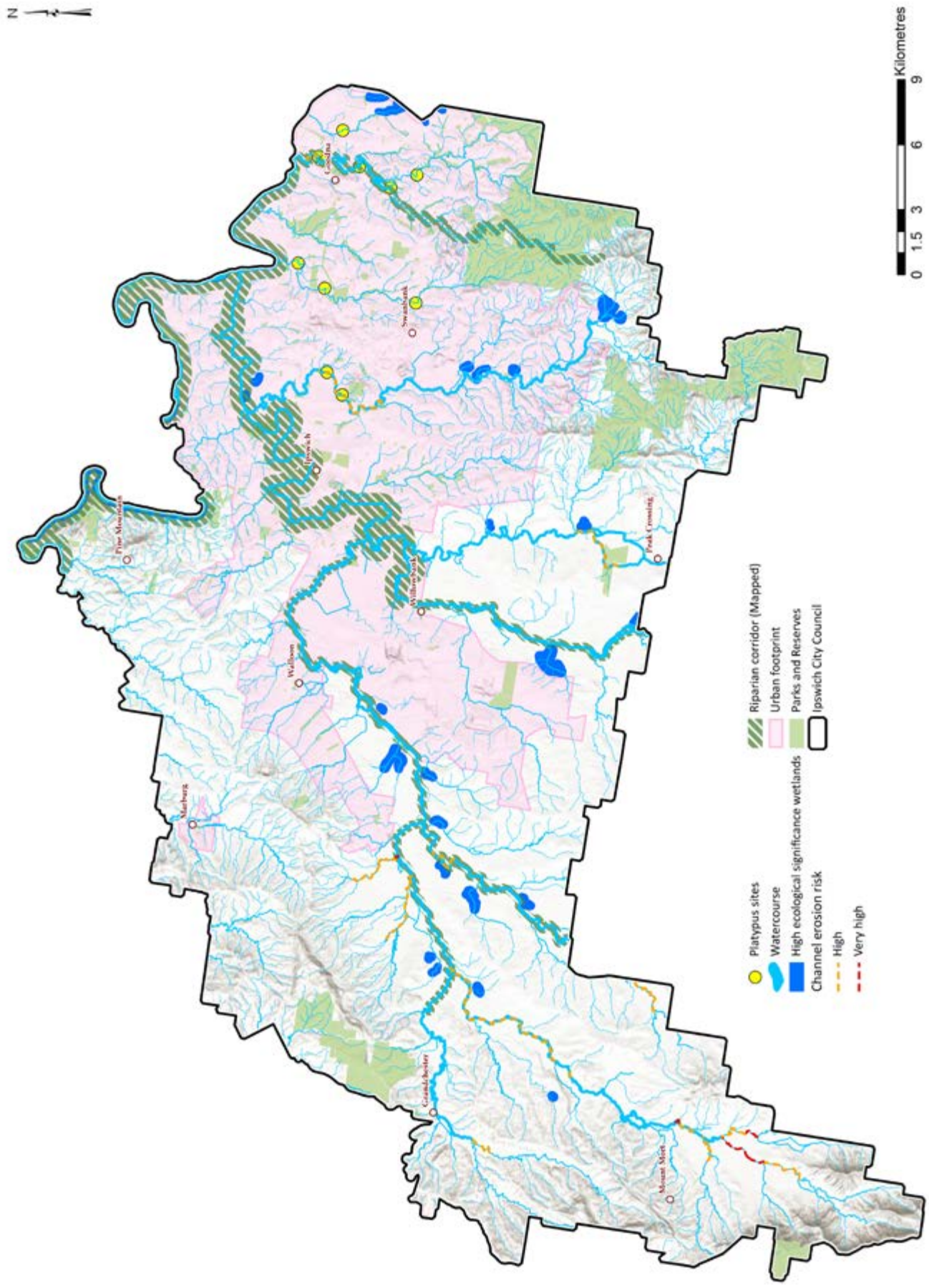
Current state	55.2% riparian extent for the Bremer River (HLW Report Card 2021)
Milestone	Improved understanding of ICC riparian extent and condition
Strategy target	>56% riparian extent with improved condition

Approach to be taken

To increase the extent and condition of riparian vegetation cover along waterways across Ipswich, council will improve the understanding of the current condition and restoration requirements for the riparian zones to inform appropriate protection measures and on-ground works.

Map 1 – Ipswich's waterways, wetlands and mapped riparian zones highlighting high and very-high erosion-risk channels where channel stabilisation is required and urban areas where erosion and sediment control and stormwater management will be important. This is based on available mapping data as described in the Natural Environment Strategy 2022 – Background Report.

**Please note the riparian corridors shown are mapped ones only and do not pick up all riparian corridors.*



2 | Biodiversity and threatened species recovery

Protecting and connecting natural habitat areas to improve the health and resilience of Ipswich's biodiversity.

Ipswich boasts one of the most diverse ranges of natural vegetation types in South-East Queensland, including rainforest, dry-vine forest, open forests, woodlands, wetlands and grasslands. A number of these vegetation communities are threatened with some ecosystems only being found in Ipswich, such as the semi-evergreen vine thicket ecosystem at Kholo Enviroplan Reserve, Saplings Pocket which is the largest remaining area of this vegetation community within South-East Queensland.

This large extent of natural vegetation communities across Ipswich also supports an equally diverse range of wildlife, including numerous rare and threatened species including the brush-tailed rock wallaby and koala.

Vegetation loss, climate change, pest species and incompatible activities within and adjacent to natural areas are key threats to the biodiversity of Ipswich. The *Nature Conservation Strategy 2015* provides more detail on the current condition, key threats and priority actions to improve biodiversity across Ipswich.

The protection and restoration of natural habitat areas and the ecological corridors which connect them are a key focus for this strategy. Natural habitat areas should be large, contiguous tracts of vegetation with reduced proportion of edges to their total area. These natural habitat areas should be connected across the landscape with corridors which are wide enough and contain a diversity of native species to support the needs and safe movement of the targeted native species.

Priority objective 1: Increased protection and restoration of natural habitat areas across Ipswich

Indicator: *Extent of natural habitat area which is protected.*

Current state	10,493ha of natural habitat areas protected
Milestone	Improved understanding of protected area condition through assessments
Strategy target	11,500ha of natural habitat areas protected across Ipswich

Approach to be taken

Council will take a coordinated and targeted approach to restore and protect natural habitat areas on both public and private lands across Ipswich including:

- protection of high value habitat areas and native vegetation through government ownership and management, legislative regulations, planning scheme zoning and local laws (i.e. vegetation protection orders)
- restoration of natural habitat areas across public and private land to enhance climate change resilience and ecological value including fire and pest species management.

Priority objective 2: Increase in ecological corridor land protected and restored across Ipswich

Indicator: *Area of mapped corridors (including riparian, urban habitat and ecological corridor areas) which has had restoration works undertaken.*

Current state	11,018ha of ecological corridors protected
Milestone	Improved understanding of protected area condition through assessments
Strategy target	Restoration of over 400ha of ecological corridor area each year

Approach to be taken

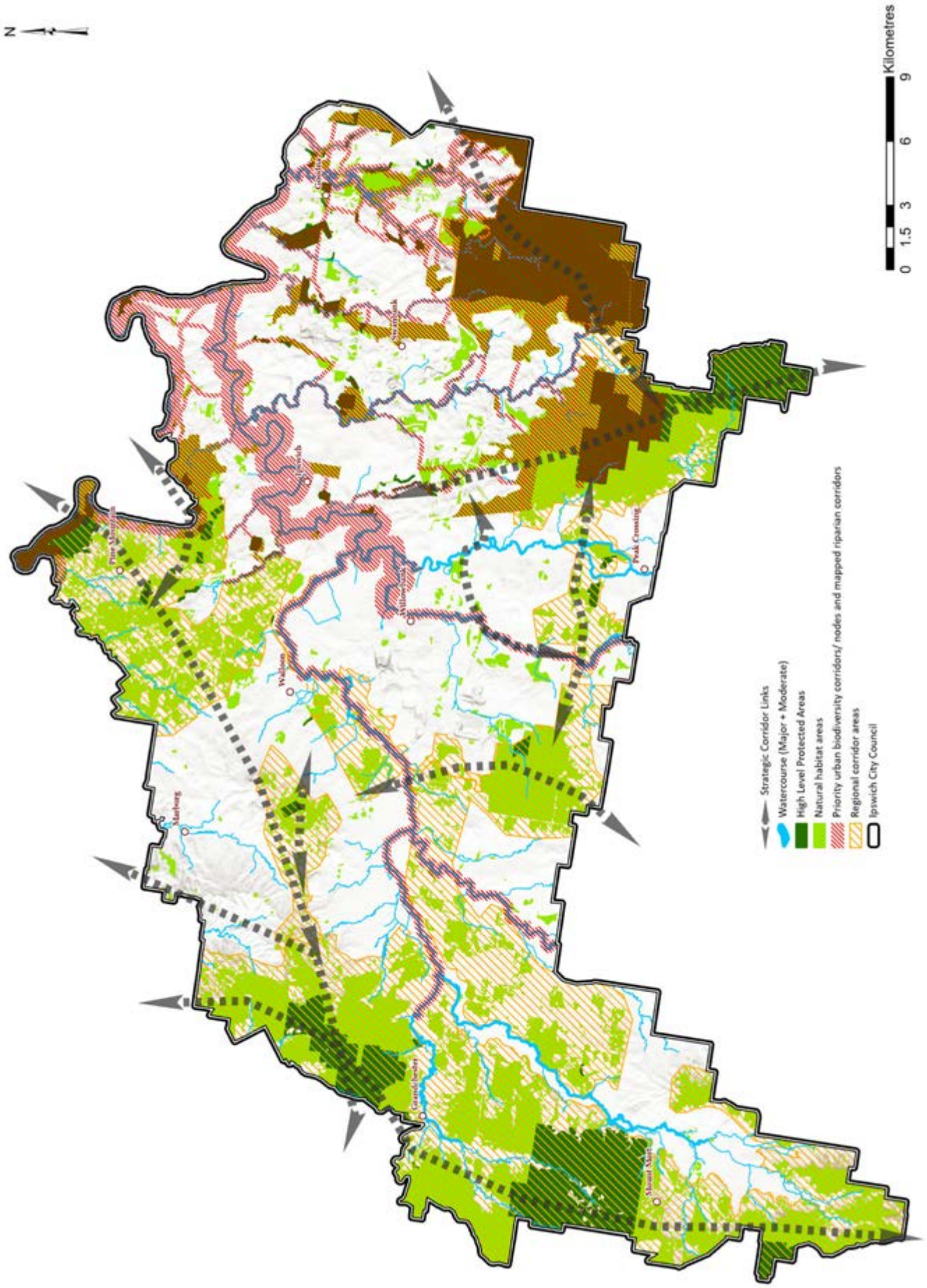
To increase the protected and restored ecological corridor land across Ipswich, council will improve the understanding of the current condition and restoration requirements for the ecological corridors to inform appropriate protection measures and on-ground restoration works.

Climate risk and adaptation – what is the risk and what is needed?

Climate change is a key threat to Ipswich's biodiversity as it will impact species' ability to adapt – either favourably or unfavourably. This may lead to biodiversity in Ipswich experiencing changes such as: shifts in genetic composition, changes in migration patterns of some birds, altered life cycles, changes in vegetation compositions, increased extinction risks and changes in fire regimes, leading to severe losses of ecosystem services. Council's strategic direction gives due consideration to climate change impacts and adaptive management responses based on science and priority management principles, including:

- **Building knowledge** – knowing what the impacts are specifically to the city's biodiversity
- **Building corridors** – linking corridors across the city – especially in urban areas
- **Increased adaptive management effort** – more targeted restoration, fire and pest management.

Map 2 – Ipswich's natural habitat areas and ecological corridors showing areas with existing high level of protection due to council ownership and management. This is based on available mapping data as described in the Natural Environment Strategy 2022 – Background Report.



3 Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape values recognition

Photo comp entrant: Sweeting M, Layered in Time, White Rock

Recognising and embedding the important relationship between the natural environment and the Traditional Owners of Ipswich.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people have a connection to country that is deeply spiritual and meaningful. There is both a physical connection to the land, waterways and other natural features; and a connection to the natural environment that defines a sense of belonging, identity, custom, relationship and spiritual belief.

There is an extensive network of natural landscapes across Ipswich which are significant Aboriginal areas as they are places where important Aboriginal traditions, observances, customs and beliefs of the Aboriginal people are held including waterways, wetlands, waterholes, rock outcrops, caves, ridges, sandy terraces, gravel bars and food trees.

If these Aboriginal cultural heritage areas and cultural landscape values are not recognised, there is the risk they will be lost or degraded due to a lack of awareness and inappropriate management. Incorporating Aboriginal ecological knowledge into the management of Ipswich's natural areas can improve the health of the environment but can also strengthen the local First Nations businesses and/or persons connection to country when they are empowered and enabled to deliver these traditional practices.

Ipswich City Council is committed to working together with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Ipswich and has identified that increased recognition of cultural values and involvement in programs for Traditional Owners to care for country are important actions in the 2020–2025 Indigenous Accord. The recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape values within natural areas and the incorporation of Aboriginal ecological knowledge into the management of Ipswich natural areas are a key focus for this strategy.

Threats to Aboriginal cultural landscape features due to climate change

Droughts and floods can lead to significant impacts on important Aboriginal cultural landscape features (such as wetlands and waterways). Cultural burning can help to manage fuel loads in vegetated areas and reduce the risk of hot and rapid bushfires.

Priority objective 1: Improved recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape values across Ipswich's natural areas

Indicator: *Combination of datasets including number of cultural interpretive signage in council natural areas, Aboriginal cultural events and number of cultural heritage assessments and cultural landscape investigations undertaken as part of council projects in natural areas.*

Current state	First cultural landscape investigation and reporting being undertaken for White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation Estate
Milestone	Interpretive signage developed to communicate cultural heritage and cultural landscape values within council owned and managed land
Strategy target	Cultural landscape investigation and reporting across Ipswich region, in locations of known cultural significance (conservation estates and reserves)

Approach to be taken

Council will improve the understanding of Ipswich's Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscapes across Ipswich's natural areas to allow improved recognition, awareness and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscapes including provision of cultural interpretive signage, community events and suitable embellishments, pathways and protection of significant cultural heritage and cultural landscape features.

The importance of community and partnerships

The involvement of the local First Nations businesses and/or persons will be critical to improve the recognition of Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscapes across Ipswich, being heavily involved in decision-making, planning and management of significant sites, landscape and flow assessments, and development of appropriate interpretive signage.

Priority objective 2: Increased used of Aboriginal ecological knowledge in the management of Ipswich's natural environment

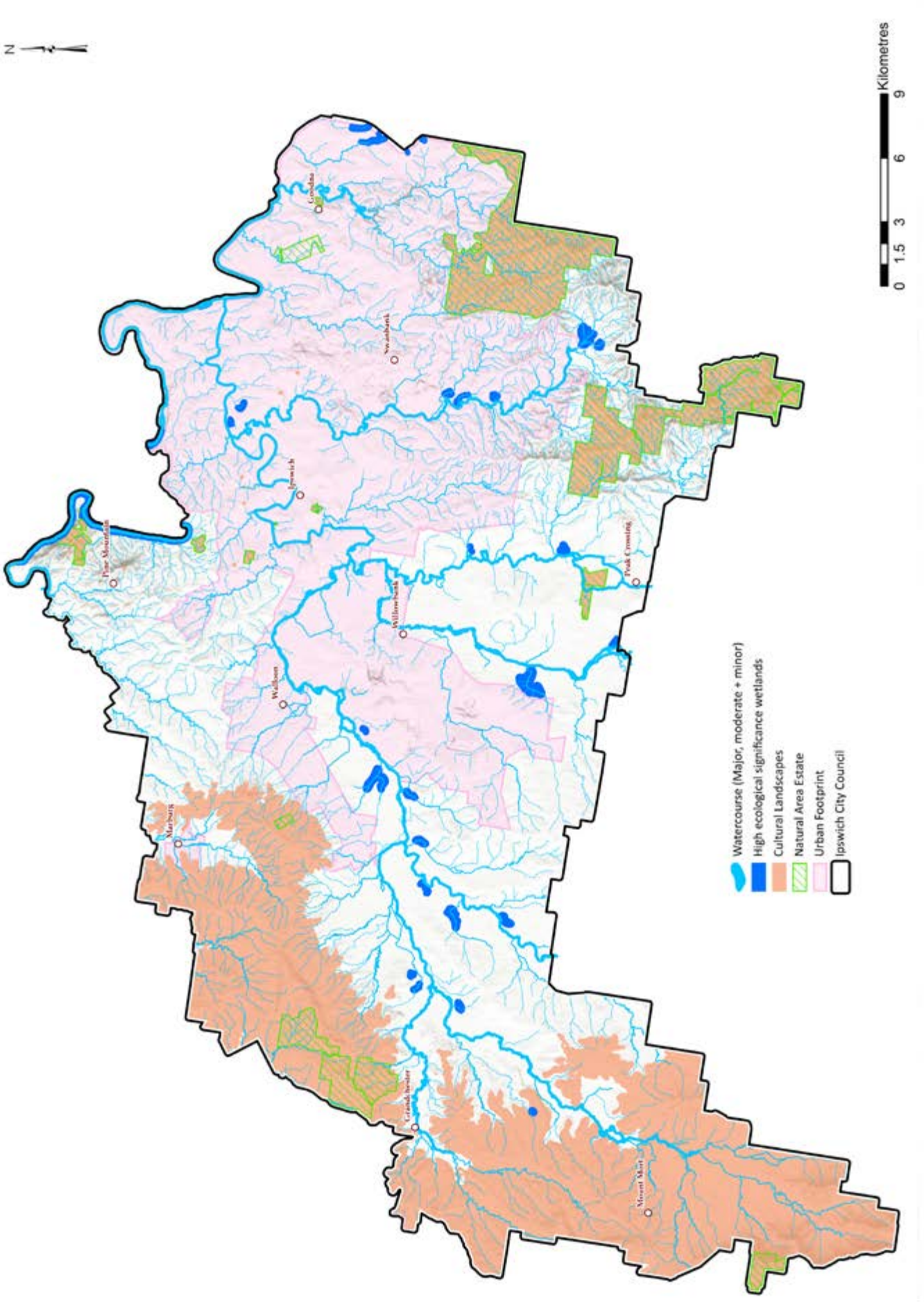
Indicator: *Combination of datasets including training for local First Nations business and/or persons in Aboriginal ecological knowledge approaches and delivery of land management by Traditional Owners.*

Current state	Funding received to support First Nations businesses fire management capacity building and training and to deliver cultural burning techniques and programs
Milestone	First Nations businesses and/ or person engaged to undertake land management using traditional ecological approaches
Strategy target	Local First Nations businesses and/or persons leading the management of council owned or managed land that contains Aboriginal cultural heritage and/or cultural landscape values

Approach to be taken

Council will continue to work with the local First Nations businesses and/or persons to improve the delivery of traditional land management practices across Ipswich's cultural landscapes.

Map 3 – Ipswich's Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape values. This is based on available mapping data as described in the Natural Environment Strategy 2022 – Background Report.



4 Urban biodiversity enhancement

Creating a connected and functional urban biodiversity network to support local plants and animals.

The natural environment landscape within the Ipswich urban footprint supports significant local priority species, connects important habitat areas as well as provides the community with cooler, healthier and more diverse areas to relax, recreate and live. Significant species found in these urban natural landscapes include koalas, platypus, white-bellied sea eagle, vulnerable powerful owl and locally significant frogs.

Photo comp entrant: S Anderson, In our Backyard

Key threats to urban biodiversity and urban biodiversity corridors include the removal of vegetation, pest species, disease, lack of adequate growing conditions, barriers to movement and climate change.

The provision of native canopy cover and urban habitat corridors are a key focus for this strategy. Ideally the canopy cover will contain a mix of native shrubs and trees species, and be in larger urban forests rather than spread out as isolated trees and other vegetation. Urban habitat corridors are likely to be smaller in size and width than larger regional ecological corridors, but they can still support habitat, air and water quality improvement, fauna movement and pollination.

Importance of urban biodiversity in a changing climate

Evidence and research are increasingly recognising the biological value and ecological importance that urban natural environment areas are providing in the broader landscape. The abundance and diversity of species in urban areas, particularly pollinators, is evidence of the important contribution these species and areas will play in a changing climate.

Priority objective 1: Increased native canopy in urban areas

Indicator: *% canopy cover in the urban footprint (above 2m) and use of local native species in council urban greening projects within priority urban habitat area nodes and corridors.*

Current state	27% canopy cover in urban footprint
Milestone	Improved understanding of urban canopy biodiversity values
Strategy target	Local native planting used for all urban greening projects in priority urban habitat areas and corridors

Approach to be taken

Council will work with landholders and developers to increase the % native canopy cover across Ipswich's urban areas by improving the understanding of the current extent and condition of Ipswich's urban native vegetation to guide the development of a clear canopy target to support urban vegetation protection and planting on public and private land.

Priority objective 2: Increase the extent and condition of protected urban habitat corridors

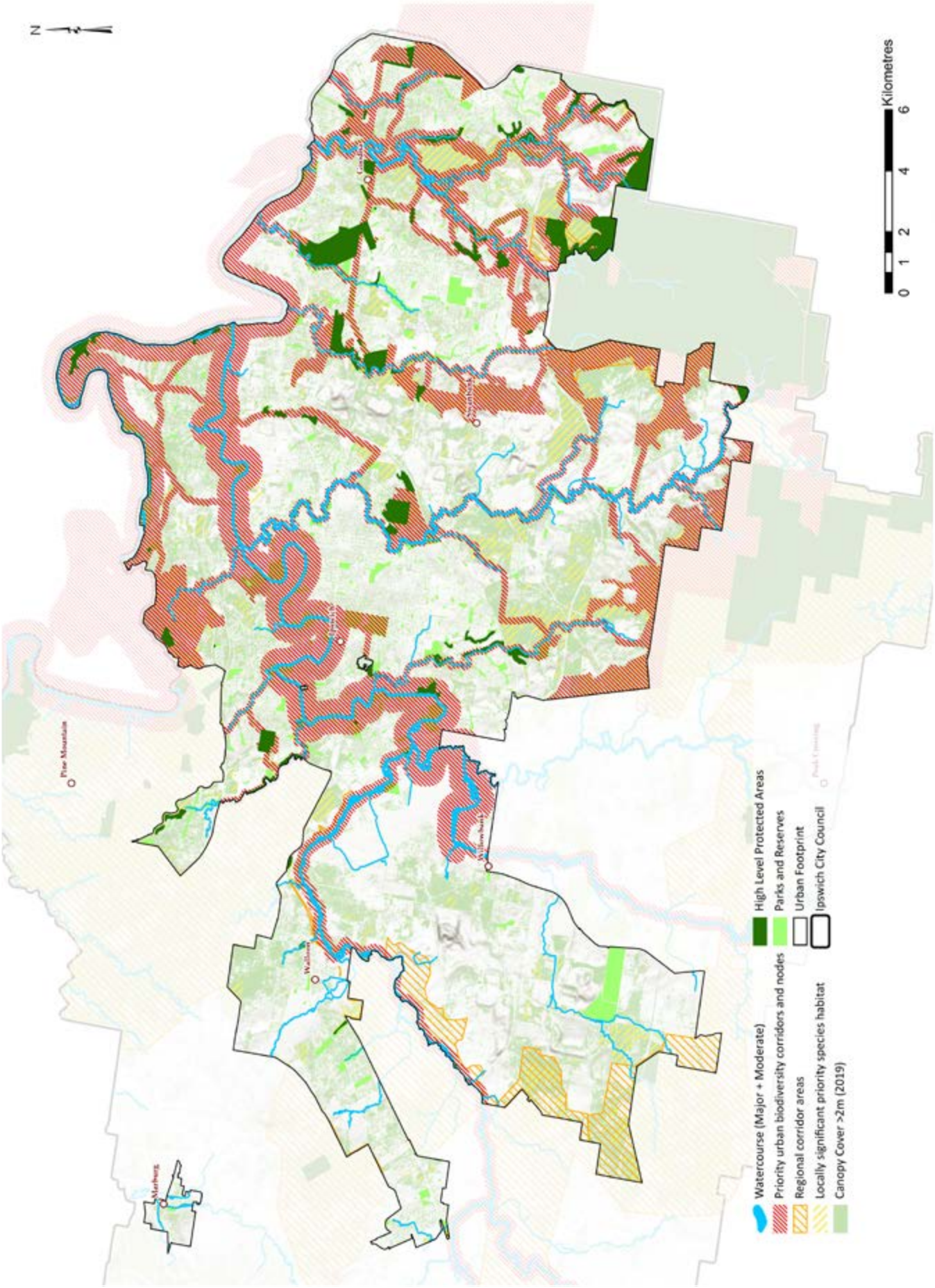
Indicator: *Area of urban habitat corridors protected and enhanced through restoration works.*

Current state	759ha of urban habitat corridors protected
Milestone	Improved understanding of protected area condition through assessments
Strategy target	Restoration of over 10ha of urban habitat corridor area each year

Approach to be taken

Council will work with landholders and developers to increase the extent and condition of urban habitat corridors by improving the understanding of the current condition of vegetation within these corridors to inform appropriate protection and restoration of these areas.

Map 4 – Ipswich's urban habitat areas and corridors showing areas with existing high level of protection due to council ownership and management. This is based on available mapping data as described in the Natural Environment Strategy 2022 – Background Report.



5 Rural biodiversity enhancement

Connecting vegetation, water and soil to improve the productivity and biodiversity of our rural lands.

Ipswich has a rich rural history and contains high value agricultural land, especially in the floodplain areas along the Bremer River, Franklin Vale Creek, Western Creek, Warrill Creek and Purga Creek. The rural landscape contains many important natural environment features including remnant vegetation, ecological corridors, waterways and wetlands. It also provides habitat for significant species such as koalas, flying foxes and Powerful Owls.

Increasing biodiversity and floodplain function of the rural landscape across Ipswich will support natural environment resilience and increase productivity. Productivity should be enhanced by expanding carbon stores (through soil organic matter), improving soil condition, reducing erosion, providing shade for stock, improved water quality and reduced flooding impacts.

Photo comp entrant: S McMahon, Spoonbill Heron

Key threats to rural land productivity, biodiversity and floodplains includes pest species, poor land management practices, vegetation removal, eroding waterway bed and banks, salinity, peri-urbanisation, climate change and mining.

The restoration of functional rural ecological corridors and floodplains are a key focus for this strategy. Ecological corridors should contain a vertical and structural diversity of native vegetation and be wide enough to support movement of target species and minimise edge impacts. Functional floodplains will be well connected to the waterway flows and support a diversity of native vegetation which is capable of responding to the different frequencies of inundation.

Floodplain wetlands can help to buffer flood impacts

Floodplains and wetlands can mitigate the impacts of floods by absorbing excess water and retaining it or returning it to groundwater. Restoring these functions in the upper catchments can help to reduce existing and future flooding impacts for the more urbanised areas downstream.

Priority objective 1: Restoration and protection of rural ecological corridors

Indicator: *Area of ecological corridors on rural lands that have had restoration works undertaken.*

Current state	10,082ha of ecological corridors across rural landscapes with high level protection
Milestone	Increase understanding of extent and requirements for rural ecological corridors
Strategy target	Restoration of over 390ha of ecological corridor area each year

Approach to be taken

Council will work with landholders to restore rural ecological corridors by improving the understanding of condition and importance of these corridors to guide appropriate protection and restoration of these areas.

Priority objective 2: Restoration and protection of functional floodplains on rural land

Indicator: *Rural floodplain extent and area of this protected and/or restored through re-engagement or revegetation works.*

Current state	135ha of rural floodplain protected
Milestone	Improved understanding of floodplain condition and function
Strategy target	50ha of rural floodplain restored

Approach to be taken

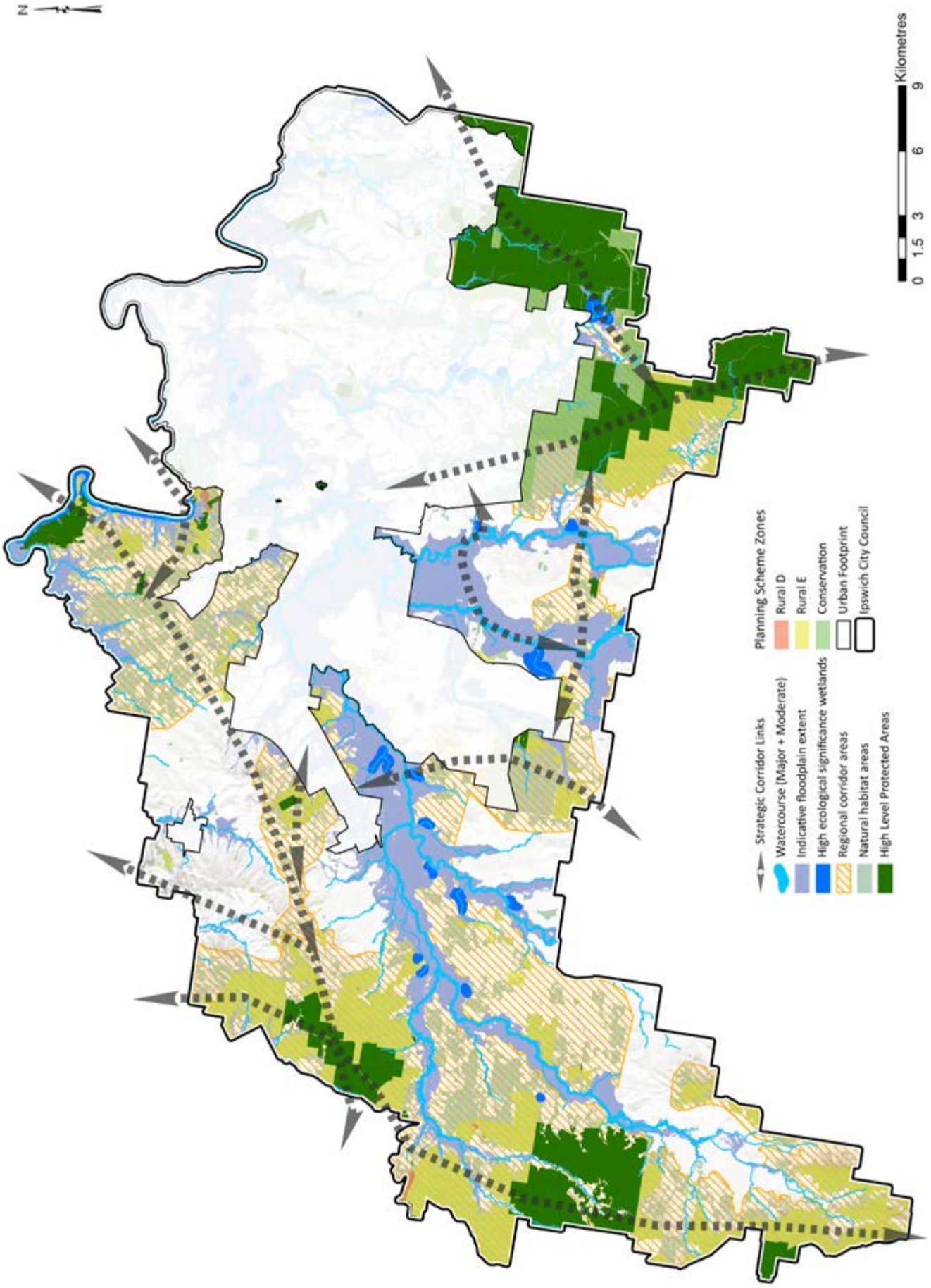
Council will take a coordinated and targeted approach to restore and protect rural floodplains across Ipswich including:

- protection of high value floodplains and wetlands
- strategic investment in floodplain areas which will deliver multiple benefits including flood mitigation and biodiversity
- landholder engagement, guidance and support to improve the understanding and management of floodplains and wetlands.

The importance of rural landholders participation

The restoration of the ecological values on rural land can only be achieved in partnership with the landholders. Council supports landholders in the protection and enhancement of ecological values on rural land through agreements such as corridor conservation agreements. These aim to restore landscape and waterway corridors across land that is not currently zoned for conservation in the planning scheme.

Map 5 – Ipswich's rural ecological corridors and floodplains showing areas with existing high level of protection due to council ownership and management. This is based on available mapping data as described in the Natural Environment Strategy 2022 – Background Report.



6 Sustainable nature-based recreation

Creating and encouraging opportunities for the community to sustainably connect with nature.

The provision of opportunities for people to connect with nature is important for physical and mental wellbeing. It is also recognised that by experiencing nature people are far more inspired to protect the natural environment.

Sustainable nature-based recreation refers to providing opportunities for the Ipswich community and visitors to connect with nature in a way that minimises impact on the natural environment values. Ipswich's open space network includes a range of green spaces, from sportsgrounds, local parks and natural areas. It also supports a range of nature-based recreation activities and programs.

In the last 10 years, and most recently since the outbreak of the Covid 19 pandemic, several areas within the network experienced a significant increase in demand for recreation. Key threats observed impacting the natural environment values and visitor experience include unmanaged access, vandalism and damage, litter, anti-social behaviour and lack of awareness and availability.

Council seeks to provide sustainable nature-based recreation across the natural area network that is environmentally and culturally sensitive, balances demand and impact, is monitored and maintained and includes interpretive signage and partnerships with community recreation groups to improve stewardship. Ideally, it will provide a range of nature-based recreational experiences to cater for different user needs ranging from provision of pathways and picnic areas through to organised events and activities to self-guided experiences.

Priority objective 1: Increase in sustainable nature-based recreation opportunities across Ipswich

Indicator: *Combination of trail lengths, trail heads, canoe launch and other nature-based recreational facilities which have been designed to protect the sites natural and cultural values.*

Current state	129km of trails provided
Milestone	Improved understanding of condition, threats and appropriate recreation activities and facilities that protect site values
Strategy target	Recreation infrastructure manages increased nature-based activities and protects the sites natural, cultural heritage and cultural landscape values

Approach to be taken

Council will work with partners to support an increase in sustainable nature-based recreation opportunities across Ipswich by providing and maintaining recreation assets and activities across natural areas which balance the existing and future use requirements, potential impacts and protection of natural environment and cultural values. Opportunities will also be sought to improve community appreciation and stewardship of these areas.

Priority objective 2: Increased community participation in nature-based activities

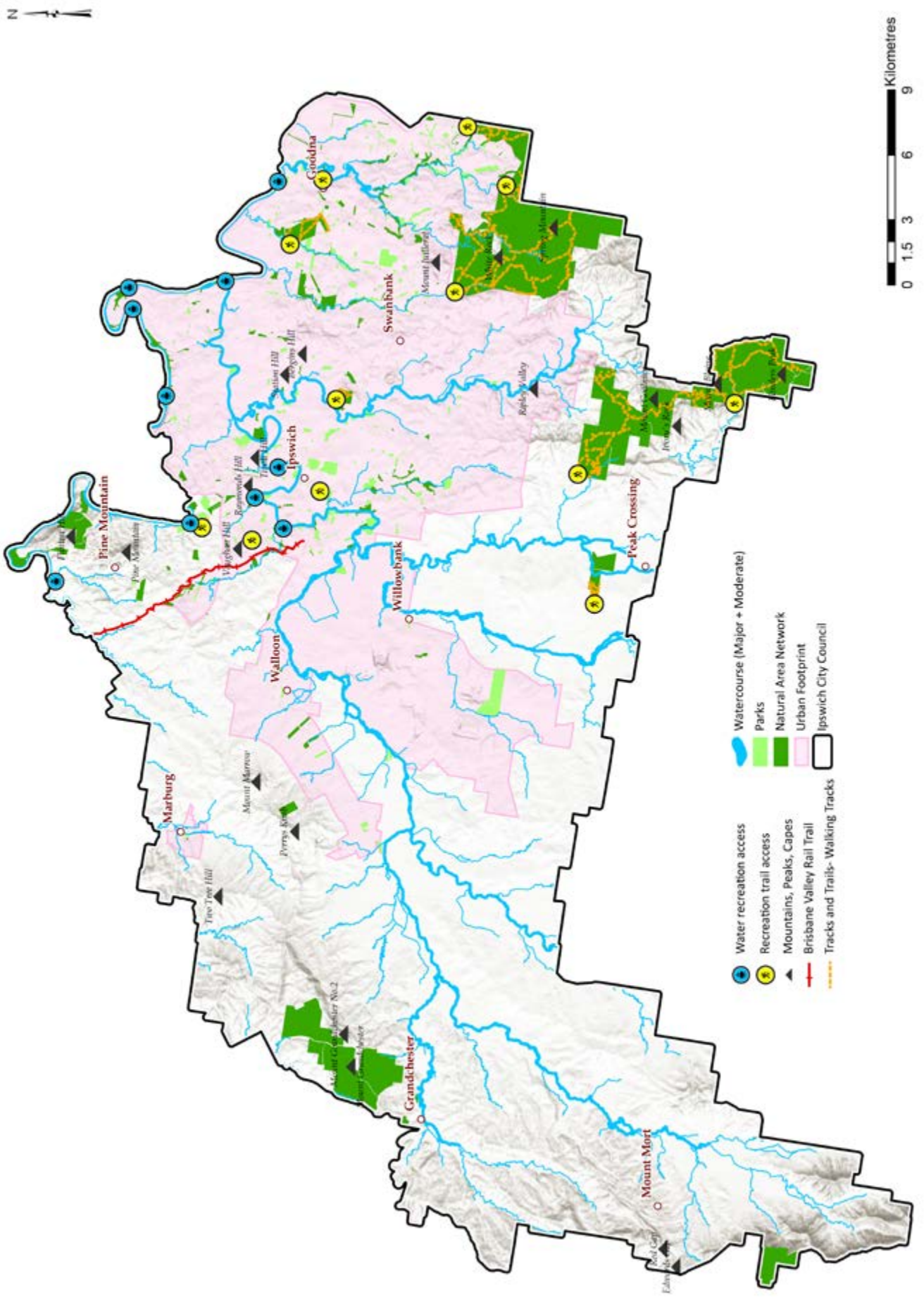
Indicator: *Visitation rates and participation rates in experience nature events.*

Current state	Over 155,000 visitors across White Rock, Mount Flinders, Castle Hill and Hillview natural area estates in 2021
Milestone	Improved understanding of visitation and participation rates in nature-based events and activities
Strategy target	5% increase in participation in nature-based activities across Ipswich

Approach to be taken

To achieve an increase in participation rates in sustainable nature-based recreation activities, council will improve the understanding of current use and additional demand to guide the provision of a diversity of facilities, programs and activities to suit user needs.

Map 6 – Ipswich's nature-based recreation network showing public park network, natural area network and existing trails and access points. This is based on available mapping data as described in the Natural Environment Strategy 2022 – Background Report.



DELIVERING INTEGRATED OUTCOMES

The Natural Environment Strategy highlights the vast number of natural environmental values and services which are provided across the Ipswich landscape. It is recognised that to deliver optimal outcomes for the environment and community across Ipswich, an integrated approach to natural environment planning and management is required.

Integrated management requires all of the existing and potential environmental values and threats across the region to be understood. This allows potential synergies and also conflicts to be identified and appropriately managed. Map 7 provides a summary of the main natural environment values and threats across Ipswich including:

- **waterways, wetlands and floodplains** – including channel erosion risk and high ecological value wetlands
- **natural habitat areas and corridors** – across both rural and urban areas (including urban expansion areas)
- **Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscape features** – including areas currently protected
- **parks and natural areas** – including where the natural areas managed by council are currently accessed by the community.

Map 7 also presents a number of key strategic locations where many of these natural environment values overlap. This strategy outlines the specific approaches which will be undertaken to improve the natural environment values for Ipswich. Table 1 outlines the priority outcomes in each of the priority areas which can be used to guide decision making around suitable approaches and future investment in these locations.

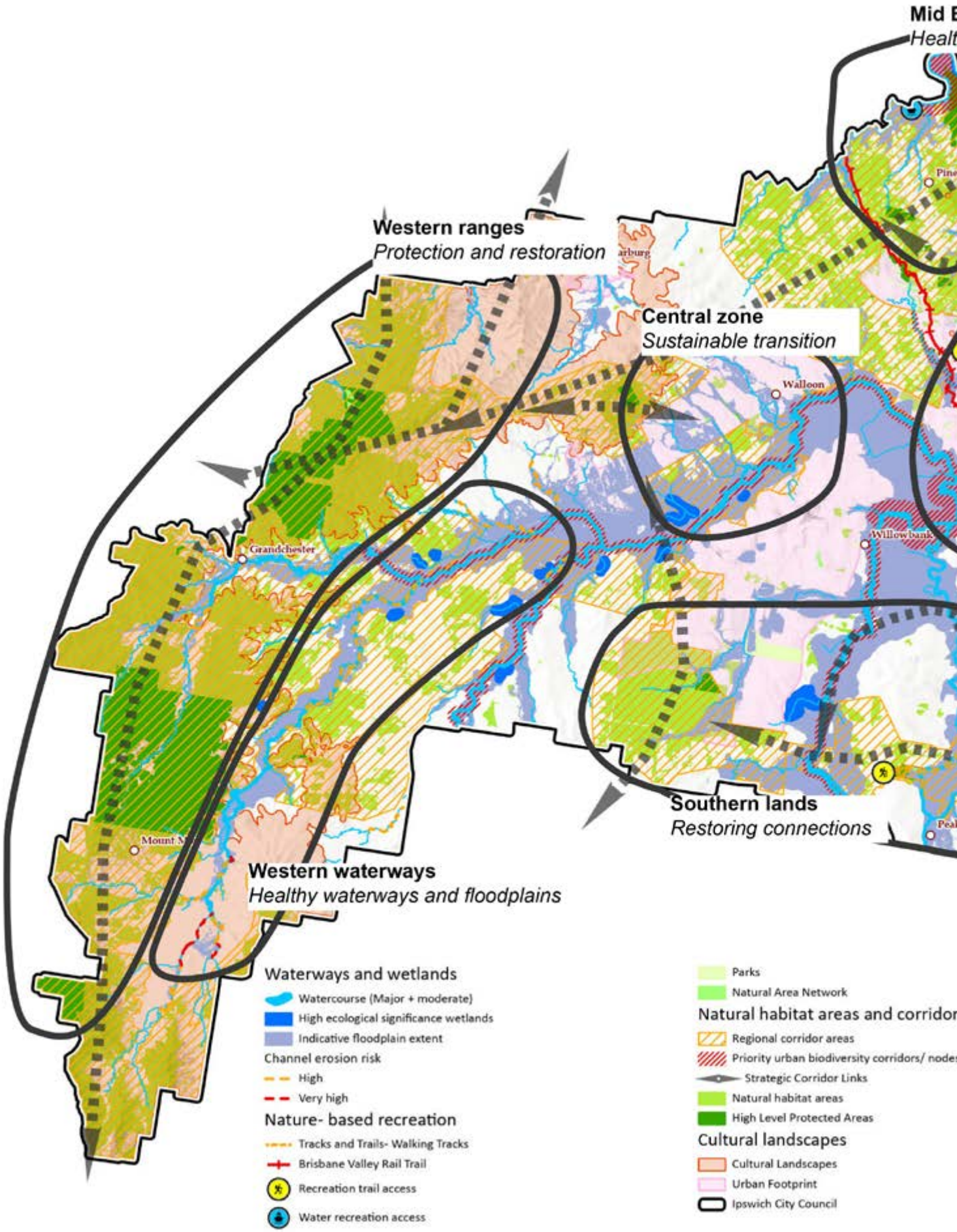
A coordinated and focused approach between council, community and private landowners will be critical to ensure these priority outcomes are delivered. Opportunities for targeted co-funding and collaboration will be sought to help deliver these integrated outcomes in a timely manner.

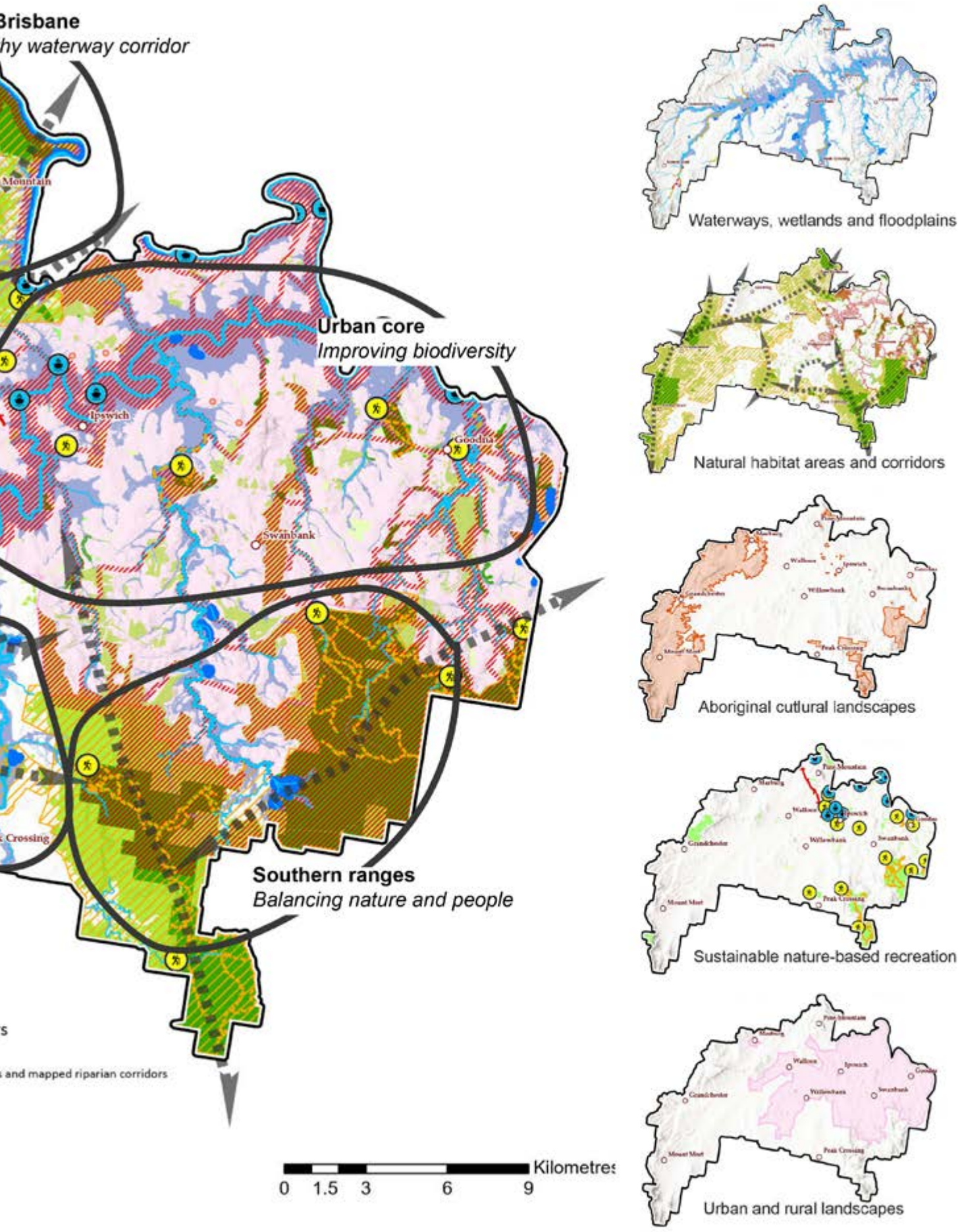
Implementation of priority projects and actions will support the strategy. These will be developed, and updated, on an annual basis for consideration as part of council's operational planning and budget process.

Table 1 – Priority areas and outcomes sought across Ipswich's natural environment

PRIORITY AREAS	PRIORITY OUTCOMES SOUGHT	STRATEGIC LOCATIONS
Western ranges *Protection and restoration*	Protection of natural habitat areas and culturally significant landscapes and restoration of native vegetation and ecological corridors.	Mount Grandchester Park
Western waterways *Healthy waterways and floodplains*	Stabilisation of eroding waterways and re-engagement with vegetated floodplains.	High risk erosion locations e.g. Franklin Vale Creek
Southern lands *Restore connections*	Improve connectivity between channel and floodplains and restore ecological corridors with protection and restoration of native vegetation.	Ecological corridors Floodplain and wetlands
Southern ranges *Balancing nature and people*	Improved ecological connection between conservation areas and across the Bundamba Creek floodplain and sustainable nature-based recreation supported in these natural areas.	Flinders - Goolman Conservation Estate and White Rock – Spring Mountain Conservation Estate. Upper Bundamba Creek floodplains
Urban core *Improving biodiversity*	Native planting to improve urban biodiversity outcomes in areas with high existing or potential ecological value.	Urban habitat corridors
Central zone *Sustainable transition*	Protection, restoration and connection of native ecological communities and floodplain function in an area transitioning into a more urban environment.	Ecological corridors Floodplain wetlands
Mid Brisbane *Healthy waterway corridor*	Improved water quality and waterway stability with controlled and managed public access to protect high value sites.	Mid Brisbane River and adjacent natural habitat areas

Map 7 – Ipswich's consolidated natural environment network showing priority areas for integrated outcomes





Waterways, wetlands and floodplains

Natural habitat areas and corridors

Aboriginal cutlural landscapes

Sustainable nature-based recreation

Urban and rural landscapes

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