



IPSWICH CITY COUNCIL

RETAINING WALLS

OVERVIEW

This fact sheet is intended to assist Ipswich residents in relation to the construction of a retaining wall on their residential property. Retaining walls are defined as a class 10b structure under the *Building Code of Australia*.

BUILDING APPROVAL

In accordance with the *Queensland Building Act 1975*, a building approval is required for the construction of a retaining wall where any of the following apply:

- has a *surcharge loading* over the *zone of influence* for the wall; or
- the total height of the wall and of the fill or cut retained by the wall is more than 1m above the wall's natural ground surface; or
- the wall is closer than 1.5m to a building or another retaining wall.

Surcharge loading means a load applied to a soil stratum that has, or may have, the effect of consolidating the stratum, other than a load arising only from—

- persons or vehicles on, or moving over, the stratum; or
- the effects of rain on the stratum.

Refer to Figure 1 for example.

Zone of influence, for the retaining wall, means the volume of soil stratum behind the wall that affects the wall's structural integrity. Refer to Figure 1 for example.

Natural ground surface means the finished surface level when the lot was created on the plan of survey.

For assistance with lodging a building application with Council, refer to the [Building Application Lodgement Checklist](#).

OTHER APPROVALS

Additional approvals may be required for the proposed work. Please refer to the **General Building Guidelines for Residential Properties** diagram on the last page of this fact sheet.

ADJOINING PROPERTIES

If the proposed building or structure has the potential to impact on a neighbour, it is recommended that you consult with that neighbour before starting any work. Consultation with your neighbour may help to avoid disputes later. Further information about avoiding disputes can be found on the [Queensland Government](#) website.

If the adjoining property owner is Council, **contact Council's Property Team on (07) 3810 7725** to initially discuss your proposal.

FURTHER INFORMATION

All retaining walls must be designed by a suitably qualified person eg. Structural Engineer. Some retaining wall systems have manufacturer specifications and installation details which should be followed.

Additional links:

- Ipswich City Council applicable [fees and charges](#).
- The [Queensland Building and Construction Commission](#) provides a fact sheet on licensing requirements of the construction of retaining walls.
- [Timber Queensland](#) provides a technical data sheet - Timber Retaining Walls for Residential Applications.
- [Concrete Masonry Association of Australia](#) provides manuals for concrete retaining walls.

FIGURE 1 – RETAINING WALL EXAMPLE

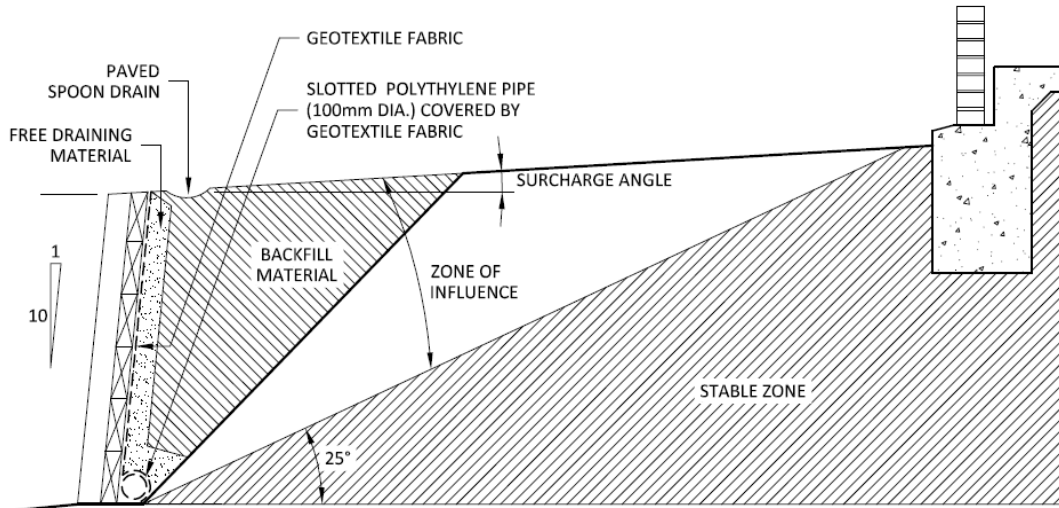
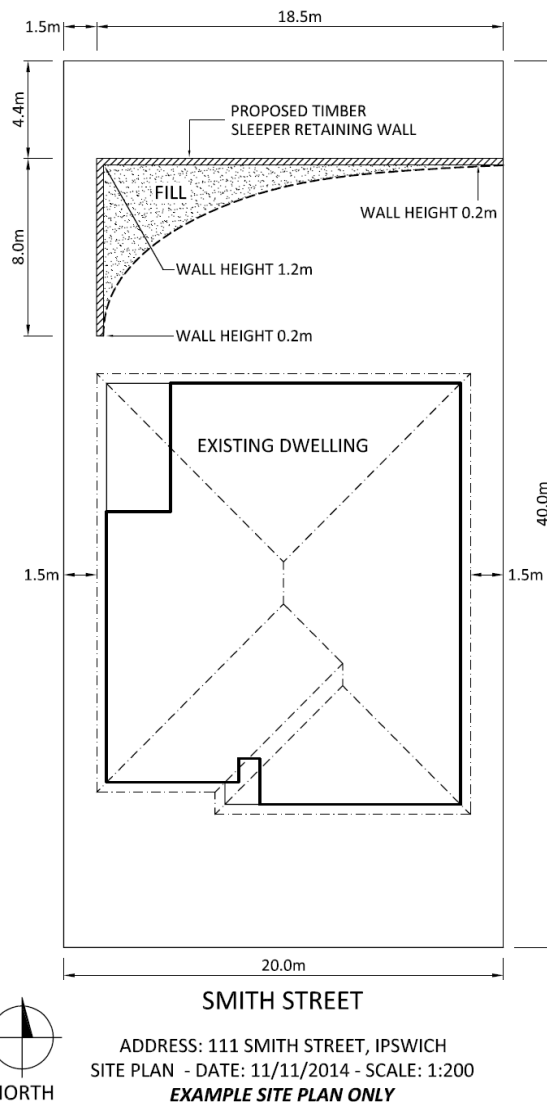


FIGURE 2 – SITE PLAN EXAMPLE



DISCLAIMER

The information contained in this document is general in nature, and before relying on the material in any important matters, users should carefully evaluate its accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance for their purpose. This document is not intended as a substitute for consulting the relevant legislation or for obtaining appropriate professional advice relevant to your particular circumstances. The Ipswich City Council does not accept responsibility or liability for any loss, damage, cost or expense incurred as a result of the use of, or reliance on, information contained in this document. These guidelines are not intended to be, and should not be relied upon as, the ultimate and complete source of information on retaining walls.

For further information, please contact Council's Planning and Development Department on (07) 3810 6888.

General Building Guidelines for Residential Properties

Building Approvals

The following types of building work undertaken on a residential property will require a building approval:

a) Dwelling (class 1 habitable structure)

- any habitable structure.

b) Decks, Balconies, Verandahs, Awnings and the like

- more than 10m² in area after building work is completed (e.g. 3.1m x 3.2m); or
- more than 2.4m high; or
- with a mean height of more than 2.1m; or
- longer than 5m along any side.

c) Garages, Sheds, Carports, Shipping Containers and the like

- more than 10m² in area after building work is completed (e.g. 3.1m x 3.2m); or
- more than 2.4m high; or
- with a mean height of more than 2.1m; or
- longer than 5m along any side.

d) Fences and Screens

- Exceeding 2.0m in height above *natural ground surface*.
- natural ground surface* - finished surface level when the lot was created on the plan of survey.

e) Retaining Walls

- has a surcharge loading over the zone of influence for the wall; or
 - the total height of the wall and of the fill or cut retained by the wall is more than 1m above the wall's *natural ground surface*; or
 - the wall is closer than 1.5m to a building or another retaining wall.
- natural ground surface* - finished surface level when the lot was created on the plan of survey.

f) Swimming Pools & Spas

- A Swimming pool or spa as defined under the Queensland Building Act 1975.

For any other building work, you should consult a building professional for advice regarding the necessity for building approval.

Shipping Containers, Railway Carriages or the like

The installation of a shipping container, railway carriage or the like within a property requires an [Amenity and Aesthetics](#) approval. For further information refer to the [Shipping Containers - Amenity and Aesthetics Implementation Guideline](#).

Building Location Envelope (BLE) ③

If the property is subject to a building location envelope (BLE), please contact Council's Planning and Development Department on (07) 3810 6888 to determine the extent of building work that is permissible within and outside of the BLE.

Boundary Truncations

Any building or structure over 1.0m in height ④

Any building or structure over 1.0m in height constructed on the property boundary, or within the 6m x 6m corner truncation area on right angled corner allotments requires a [Siting Variation](#) approval. Refer to Retaining Walls, Fences and Screens information for other approvals that may be required.

Any building or structure over 2.0m in height ⑤

Any building or structure over 2.0m in height constructed on the property boundary, or within the 9m x 9m truncation at the corner of the 2 road frontages requires a [Siting Variation](#) approval. Refer to Retaining Walls, Fences and Screens information for other approvals that may be required.

Residential Driveways ⑥

For locations and requirements refer to [Council Driveways](#) information.

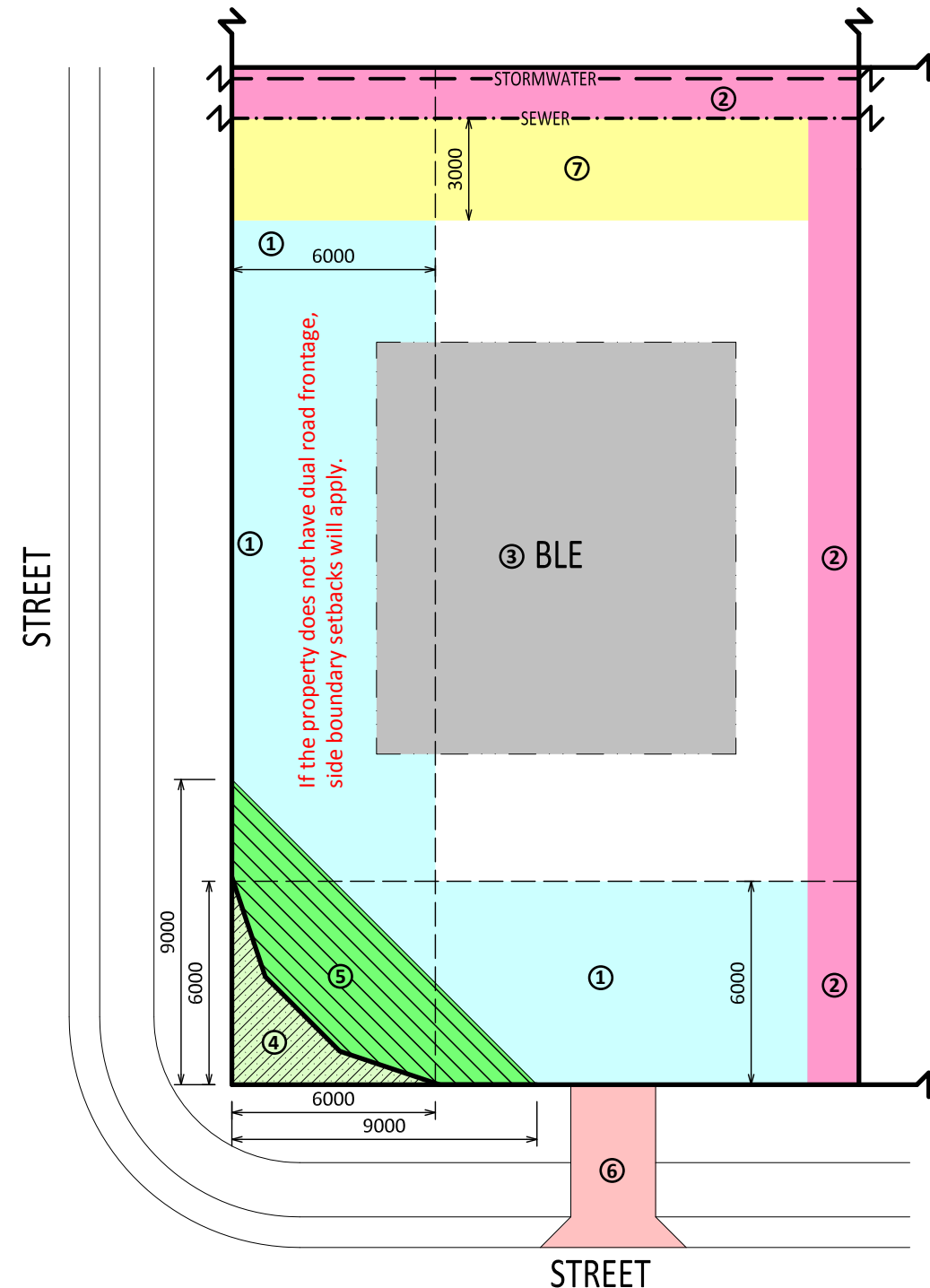
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Build Over or Near Relevant Infrastructure ⑦

Despite any boundary setback allowances noted in this guideline building work that is proposed to be constructed within 3.0m of any relevant infrastructure (sewer, water, stormwater) will be required to comply with the Queensland Development Code [MP1.4 Building over or near relevant infrastructure](#).



Dwellings

A dwelling constructed within 6m of a road boundary setback ① or constructed within the minimum side and rear boundary setbacks ②, which does not comply with the table below, requires a [Siting Variation](#) approval.

Side and Rear Boundary Setbacks ②

Column 1 - Boundary	Column 2 - Dimensions of clearance
Usual standard if the maximum height of the building or structure is:	
(i) 4.5m or less	not less than 1.5m
(ii) between 4.5m and 7.5m	not less than 2.0m
(iii) greater than 7.5m	not less than 2.0m plus 0.5m for every 3m or part of 3m by which the height is greater than 7.5m
(iv) stepped	the boundary clearance corresponding to the height of each step

Carport, Sheds, Garages or the like

Closed carports, sheds, garages or the like constructed within 6m of a road boundary setback ① require a [Siting Variation](#) approval.

Open carports, may be constructed up to the road boundary provided that:

- the maximum width of the carport does not exceed 3m, excluding a maximum eave overhang of 600mm; and
- the overall building height of the carport does not exceed 4.5m; and
- the wall height of the carport does not exceed 3.6m.

If all of the above are not able to be met a [Siting Variation](#) approval will be required.

Carports, sheds, garages or the like are permitted to be built up to the side and rear property boundary ② provided that:

- the maximum height of the building is not more than 4.5m and the *mean height* is not more than 3.5m; and
- the total length of all buildings within the prescribed boundary setbacks when added together does not exceed 9m; and
- the building is at least 1.5m from the window of each habitable room in an existing building on an adjoining lot.

If all of the above are not able to be met a [Siting Variation](#) approval will be required.

Mean height is the total elevational area of the building divided by the horizontal length of the building facing the boundary.

Existing Carport

If there is an existing carport already approved within the 6m minimum road boundary setback ①, any additional carport within the road boundary setback ①, will require an [Amenity and Aesthetics](#) approval.

Amenity and Aesthetics

Any carport, garage or shed that:

- is more than 1 storey in height; or
- has any wall height of more than 3.6m (measured along the pitching line); or
- has a roof/plan area exceeding 80m² on a parcel of land less than 2,000m² in area; or
- has a roof/plan area exceeding 100m² on a parcel of land between 2,000m² and 1.5ha in area; or
- is erected on vacant land (not containing a dwelling).

Requires an [Amenity and Aesthetics](#) approval.

Retaining Walls - when measured from *natural ground surface*:

natural ground surface - finished surface level when the lot was created on the plan of survey.

The following boundary setback provisions apply except for boundary truncations.

- Retaining walls below 1.0m in height may be built up to the property boundary.
- Retaining walls between 1.0m to 2.0m in height that are constructed on the property boundary, or within the 6m road boundary setback ①, or the 1.5m side and rear boundary setbacks ②, requires a [Siting Variation](#) approval.
- Retaining walls or any combination of retaining wall and fence or screen exceeding a total height of 2.0m that is not constructed on the property boundary, or within the 6m boundary setback ①, or the 1.5m side and rear boundary setbacks ②, requires an [Amenity and Aesthetics](#) approval.
- Retaining walls or any combination of retaining wall and fence or screen exceeding a total height of 2.0m that is constructed on the property boundary, or within the 6m road boundary setback ①, or the 1.5m side and rear boundary setbacks ②, requires a [Siting Variation](#) approval and an [Amenity and Aesthetics](#) approval.

Fences and Screens - when measured from *natural ground surface*:

natural ground surface - finished surface level when the lot was created on the plan of survey.

The following boundary setback provisions apply except for boundary truncations.

- Fences or screens that are below 2.0m in height may be built up to the property boundary.
- Fences or screens exceeding 2.0m in height constructed on the property boundary, or within the 6m road boundary setback ①, or the 1.5m side and rear boundary setbacks ②, will require a [Siting Variation](#) approval.

Town Planning Approvals

Notwithstanding the information contained within this document, it should be noted that a planning approval may be required to be obtained prior to commencing building or construction works.

Examples of where a planning application may be triggered include:

- if the site is located within a Character zone or on a Character listed property;
- if the building or structure does not comply with the design criteria detailed in the Residential Code; or
- if the site is affected by a Development Constraint Overlay.

Further planning related information such as planning scheme zones and development constraint overlays can be obtained from Council's PD Online page on Council's website (www.ipswich.qld.gov.au).

Alternatively, further planning related information can be obtained by contacting Council's Planning and Development Department on (07) 3810 6888.