

Low Impact Rural Tourism Local Planning Policy

VERSION 3

December 2015

town planning services

Version	Adoption	Comment
1	10 July 2007 Council Item DS001	Final – No objections received during advertising.
2	15 June 2010 Council Item SC166	Final – No objections received during advertising.
2	1 July 2011 Council Item SC001	Final – Readopted under the new City of Greater Geraldton.
3	15 December 2015 Council Item DRS242	Readopted under the new LPS No. 1.

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1.0 CITATION

This is a local planning policy prepared under the *Planning and Development (Local Planning Schemes) Regulations 2015* and the City of Greater Geraldton Local Planning Scheme No. 1 ('the Scheme'). It may be cited as the *Low Impact Rural Tourism local planning policy*.

The local government may prepare a local planning policy in respect of any matter related to the planning and development of the Scheme area. In making a determination under the Scheme the local government must have regard to each relevant local planning policy to the extent that the policy is consistent with the Scheme.

2.0 BACKGROUND

Land within the rural areas generally has agricultural value worthy of conservation for agricultural purposes. Land uses and developments, including tourism development, which detract from its agricultural productivity must be resisted.

The region has high natural amenity values resulting in strong demands for tourist accommodation not only in established settlements but also in the rural areas. Any development not required for agricultural purposes risks erosion of the environmental and landscape qualities tourists wish to visit and enjoy.

In terms of economic, social and environmental sustainability, it is vital that the overall qualities, amenity and character of the municipality be preserved. The risks for sustainable development from approving numerous low impact tourist developments (above the maximum scale of development) are that there will not only be an incremental diminution in the rural character and amenity of the areas in which they are to be established, but also a reduction in the primary agricultural production capability of the land.

While low impact tourist developments individually may detract little from rural values, the cumulative effect of proliferation will seriously erode the rural ambience they are designed to exploit. While individually each use and development may have little impact upon the area in which it is located, directional and on-site signage that indicates its presence combined with increased traffic generated on local roads create a general sense that the rural character of the area has been invaded by uses which are not essential to the rural functions of the affected locality.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- a) To pursue the principle that commercial tourist development should generally occur within the urban areas and that opportunities should be provided for small-scale and low impact tourist accommodation and related activities in rural areas.
- b) Provide for tourist accommodation in the rural areas in a manner that does not conflict with the Scheme objectives.
- c) To establish criteria for low impact tourist development in rural areas to ensure that the environmental attributes, landscape values and the visual and rural character and amenity of the municipality is not compromised.
- d) Optimise both the agricultural and tourism potential of the rural areas without detrimental impact on the inherent natural beauty and value of those areas.

- e) To set out the circumstances under which the local government may approve low impact tourist development in the rural areas of the municipality as provided in the Scheme.
- f) To set out the procedures to be observed where low impact tourist development is not incidental or ancillary to the primary agricultural or rural use of the land.

4.0 POLICY MEASURES

4.1 General

4.1.1 Low impact tourist development should:

- a) Not produce any poorly understood risks of serious or irreversible environmental damage;
- a) Not introduce land use incompatibilities with established or potential agricultural activities on adjoining or nearby land in the locality;
- b) Not generate further traffic or require road improvements or signage likely to adversely affect the rural character of the road(s) serving the localities;
- c) Not lead to the consolidation of such activities to the point where the rural character or amenity of the locality is seriously compromised;
- d) Economically assist, promote, and form part of the productive agricultural enterprise (or rural use) to avoid potential land use incompatibilities;
- e) Utilise noise reduction techniques, filter systems and similar methods of construction to mitigate the effects of agricultural activity on the residents and patrons of the low impact tourist development; and
- f) Be appropriately screened from view especially from neighbours, public vantage points such as roads, public reserves and the like by existing vegetation or by effective new landscaping using species indigenous to the area.

4.1.2 Preference will be given to development proposals that show sensitivity to the local, natural and cultural environment and are ancillary to the agricultural or rural land use, thereby adding to the sustainability of the agricultural industry or biodiversity conservation on that land.

4.1.3 The local government will actively discourage development that:

- a) Is situated in visually significant locations, such as on ridges or along unscreened sections of regional or tourist roads;
- b) Involves major disturbance of remnant bushland or natural areas;
- c) Is located on land of no particular topographical or landscape interest or value; and
- d) Is of a development form that resembles urban based tourism such as motels, resorts and the like.

4.2 Maximum Scale of Development

- 4.2.1 The maximum scale of development that will be accommodated on lots within the rural areas is no more than 3 chalets/cabins or a bed and breakfast facility or a 4 bedroom guest house which accommodates no more than 8 people (or other tourist facilities of similar land use intensity).
- 4.2.2 Larger scaled developments and land uses will not be approved under this policy and will require, if found to be justified, an amendment to the Scheme to incorporate specific zoning for the development proposed.

4.3 Eco-Tourism

- 4.3.1 The use of “eco” (or similar), as a descriptor of a particular low impact tourist development proposal, will not be approved by the local government unless the development provides an eco opportunity. Where this term is arbitrarily used to describe a low impact tourism development it thereby inhibits the risk of misleading or deceiving tourism consumers and creating a false impression that the natural environment is protected from adverse impact by a particular development.
- 4.3.2 This definition of eco tourism is expanded into a set of core principles, which the local government will use to ascertain whether or not the development proposal deserves a designation of eco (or similar description):
- a) There will be a focus on giving visitors the opportunity to personally and directly experience nature;
 - b) It will provide opportunities that lead to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the natural environment;
 - c) It will incorporate best practice for environmentally sustainable tourism;
 - d) It will contribute directly to the conservation of natural areas;
 - e) It will provide ongoing contributions to the local community;
 - f) It will be sensitive to, interpret and involve the culture(s) existing in the area consistently meets consumer expectations; and
 - g) It will be marketed and promoted honestly and accurately so that realistic expectations are formed.

4.4 Water Supply

Low impact rural tourism development must be either connected to a reticulated water supply, or alternatively, be serviced by a rainwater tank of suitable capacity taking into consideration the quantity/reliability of any on-site, potable groundwater supplies.

4.5 Subdivision / Strata Title

Subdivision and/or strata subdivision of rural land on which tourism development is proposed or existing will not be supported by the local government. Such proposals are not considered appropriate because they create circumstances where tourist activities can be operated independently of the principal agricultural or rural use of the land, thereby fragmenting rural land and leading to an increased likelihood of land use incompatibilities.

4.6 Application Requirements

- 4.6.1 A report of how the proposal can fit in with the locality. This means showing a sympathetic and well-mannered design without unreasonable impacts either on the agricultural, natural or cultural environment and that any impacts will be contained within the site.
- 4.6.2 A report stating how the proposal will satisfy the tourist occupants. The development must be shown to be safe from fire and other hazards (internal and external) and provides a high level of amenity and services to the tourist occupants.
- 4.6.3 A report demonstrating how the operation of the development will continue to attend to matters of environmental concern, rural amenity and the well being and safety of the tourist occupants (once the development is established).
- 4.6.4 A comprehensive site analysis plan will be required to assist staff to understand the constraints and opportunities on the lot on which the development is proposed. The site analysis should:
- a) Clearly identify the proposed development site in relation to the naturally and built existing features both on the subject land and on the adjoining land;
 - b) Should demonstrate that the development concept can fit in with the existing setting; and
 - c) The following information must be included on the site analysis plan:
 - Contours and major physical features;
 - Existing vegetation;
 - Creek lines and wetlands;
 - Distances and any sightliness to adjoining dwellings;
 - Views; and
 - Location of existing services.
- 4.6.5 Unless otherwise specifically provided for in the Scheme, all applications for low impact tourist development will be advertised in accordance with the Scheme requirements.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

Agricultural means purposes/pursuits associated with agriculture, horticulture and viticulture.

Rural means land zoned Rural or Rural Residential under the Scheme.

Low Impact Rural Tourism means the use and development of land, principally for tourist purposes, in such a manner that does not detract from the rural and natural amenity of the locality, and includes the following criteria:

- Located to avoid ridge lines, escarpments or visually exposed sites and situated where vegetation or land form can be utilised for screening;

- Sensitively located and designed to promote positive outcomes and positive environmental outcomes and minimise impact on vegetation, water courses, soil quality and existing land uses;
- Will not cause a net loss of vegetation;
- Scale and nature to be self-sustaining on the land, or demonstrate the ability to provide servicing without significant modifications to existing infrastructure;
- The nature of its scale, design, colours, materials, landscaping and use has minimal visual impact on the site and surrounding areas; and
- Minimal off-site environmental or social adverse impacts.

Low Impact Tourist Developments include farmstay accommodation that encompasses chalet, bed and breakfast, cabins and guesthouse short-stay accommodation. Development is generally of single storey or split level construction and has a character not dissimilar to farm dwellings.

Chalet means self-contained premises usually comprising cooking facilities, en-suite, living area and 1 or 2 bedrooms.

Cabin means self-contained premises similar to a chalet but may lack en-suite facilities and may comprise only one room.

Guesthouse means integrated premises comprising serviced accommodation units and centralised facilities such as dining (not being a public restaurant) and other facilities.

Eco-Tourism means ecologically sustainable tourism which has a primary focus on experiencing natural areas and fosters environmental protection and restoration, and cultural understanding and appreciation of the natural environment.