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C347**TOURISM, ACCOMMODATION AND FUNCTION CENTRE DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL AREAS**

This policy applies to all land zoned Farming and Rural Conservation. This policy does not apply to a dwelling use.

Policy Basis

The rural areas of Geelong and its many attractions are highly valued for their contribution to the economy, liveability and amenity of the whole municipality. Tourism is a key part of the economy of Greater Geelong, in particular on the Bellarine Peninsula.

Growth of the tourism economy is expected across Geelong to 2030. Most of this tourism growth is directed to Central Geelong and other townships where there is existing capacity and a settlement strategy that caters for future growth.

There are opportunities to enhance the tourism industry in rural areas through well designed developments that are associated with the farming or rural use of the land. Tourism development forecasts show that there is a demand of between 330 to 550 accommodation rooms or caravan sites in rural Geelong to 2030. Camping and caravan parks currently are traditionally the most common form of accommodation in the rural areas of Geelong with a focus on the family market. There is a need to expand the type of accommodation provided in rural areas to improve the market offer and encourage longer term stays. This includes farm stays, accommodation associated with wineries and golf courses, nature based accommodation and integrated resort accommodation that is dispersed across the rural area.

Tourism development within the rural areas must be carefully managed and designed so that it does not compromise the rural landscape character or existing agricultural activities that are part of the economy and tourism attraction of the area.

Function centres and restaurants may also be considered as tourism ventures, particularly when co-located or associated with other tourism activity. Camping and caravan parks that result in long term or permanent housing accommodation risk resulting ad hoc urban extensions. This undermines the settlement strategy and can also lead to poor social outcomes and community connectivity. Camping and caravan parks must be designed to cater for the tourism market.

Objectives

- To support tourism development in rural areas that contributes to the growth of the tourism market.
- To diversify the range of accommodation types to address an identified demand.
- To preserve the productive agricultural capacity of the land and where possible enhance the environmental condition of the land.
- To ensure the scale of development will complement and respect the rural landscape character of the area;
- To ensure development will not result in the urbanisation of the area;
- To ensure a mix of accommodation options are provided in camping and caravan parks.

Policy

For tourism, accommodation and function centre uses , it is policy that:

Preferred location

- The use will be associated with an agricultural activity on the property unless all the following are met:
 - It is demonstrated that the circumstances of the use are unique and support site selection in a rural location over an urban location.
 - The site is strategically located with respect to an identified tourist route, such as the tourist route identified in the *Bellarine Peninsula Localised Planning Statement* or along the Bellarine Highway. Preference will be given to areas where there is already a cluster of non-rural activities and additional development will not result in urbanisation.
 - The use and its associated development would not unreasonably visually compromise a non-urban break between settlements, a significant view or area identified for landscape significance or environmental significance.
 - The use can address a regionally recognised demand identified in a tourism development strategy.
- Tourist accommodation provides a connection or access to a tourist facility, tourist attraction or outdoor recreation.

Impacts on agricultural productivity

- The use and development will not be out of balance with, nor change the character and nature of the primary rural land use, or result in an unreasonable loss of productive agricultural land;
- The proportion of the property used for tourism and ancillary infrastructure is minimised, and is directed to the area of lowest agricultural quality or where the natural landscape has been modified;
- Existing agricultural activity on adjoining land will not be compromised;

Design and siting

- Buildings and structures are designed and sited to not be visually dominant and can blend into the surrounding landscape and natural environment. Visual impacts should be mitigated or minimised through appropriate design, landscaping, materials and colours.
- Buildings incorporate a high design standard with environmentally sustainable design features.
- The design of a residential hotel or group accommodation avoids large, single footprint buildings and is distinguishable from a dwelling.

Amenity

- Neighbouring properties are protected from unacceptable disturbance associated with the hours of operation, number of patrons, or vehicular movements resulting from the use.

Traffic and Services

- Adequate area is set aside for on site car parking and landscaping.
- The site has access to an appropriately constructed or sealed road that is capable of accommodating anticipated traffic levels or has convenient access to a major road.
- The site has access to all necessary servicing infrastructure. Where infrastructure is required or needs upgrading the applicant will meet all costs.

Camping and caravan park design

In addition to the above policy, a camping and caravan park should also meet the following:

- A camping and caravan park will include a mix of tourist accommodation site types and visitor facilities including:
 - Sites for caravans, motor homes or tents;
 - Sites with unregisterable movable dwellings;
 - Sites for caravans with rigid annexes;
 - Sites with cabins;
 - Lodge accommodation;
 - Ablution blocks;
 - Communal and recreation facilities; or
 - Facilities that allow for public pre-booked or walk up bookings.
- The layout and design of the camping and caravan park will have the appearance of a camping and caravan park, rather than a residential village or subdivision – which could include restricted access, permanent constructed roads, larger building footprints, higher building densities, the provision of individual carports/garages, and building design that resembles a permanent residence, rather than a holiday cabin.

Application Requirements

An application should be accompanied by the following information to the satisfaction of the responsible authority, as appropriate:

- A description of the proposal, including a site context report; hours and days of operation; number of staff and visitors or patrons; type and number of accommodation buildings, units or camping sites; or a description of how a camping and caravan park is to be established and operate as a tourist park.
- A land management plan outlining measures to address agricultural production and environmental protection, including pest plants and animals and erosion of the land; as well as fencing off remnant vegetation, revegetating strategic areas to develop wildlife corridors and along waterways.
- A management plan outlining the following as appropriate:
 - The mechanisms to be put in place to ensure onsite and offsite amenity is maintained on an ongoing basis, including onsite caretaker arrangements;
 - Traffic management procedures;
 - Set up and down procedures for functions and events;
 - Litter and waste effluent management;
 - Staffing and staff training procedures;
 - Requirement and procedure to inform adjoining residents of when a function or event is to be held; or
 - The requirement for the provision of an onsite manager for the duration of a function or event and the complaints procedure.
- A landscape plan, including a landscape character assessment for site and building design with an outline of the impact on the rural landscape.
- An acoustic report outlining noise impacts and noise mitigation measures.

- A traffic report.

Decision guidelines

Before deciding on an application the responsible authority must consider, as appropriate:

- If the use is associated with a farming activity on the site.
- If a rural location is required in favour of an urban location.
- The proximity and access to tourism features and infrastructure.
- Potential impacts on the rural landscape character of the area.
- How the land use is consistent with tourism strategies for the area and promotes the regional tourism economy and expands accommodation typologies.
- The mix and type of accommodation provided.
- The potential impact the use will have on neighbouring properties, including agricultural operations.
- If the proposal will maintain and/or improve the productive capacity or environmental condition of the site.

References

City of Greater Geelong Rural Land Use Strategy, City of Greater Geelong, 2007.

Managing Development in Rural Areas, Planning Policy Review, City of Greater Geelong, 2015.