

22.0219/01/2006
VC37**RURAL LAND CHARACTER AND URBAN DESIGN LOCAL POLICY**

This policy applies to land included within a Rural Zone, Environmental Rural Zone or Rural Living Zone.

Policy Basis

Much of the rural land in the City is characterized by a flat and sparsely treed landscape that enables open views across wide expanses of cleared grazing land. One of the consequences of such an open landscape is that there is a limited amount of development that can be absorbed without the rural character fundamentally changing.

The City also contains highly visible and largely undeveloped hills and ridges as well as very steep, sloping and densely vegetated creek valleys. These features strongly influence the character of the City's rural areas and provide important backdrops to its urban areas and towns. They are also evocative reminders of the City's rich cultural heritage.

Development which is incompatible with the landscape or which is highly visible has the potential to diminish the visual qualities of these features and the rural character of the City. Incompatible developments can include large and poorly sited buildings, inappropriate building colours and materials, and poorly sited access roads. It is important that development seeks to minimise potential adverse visual impacts, instead building upon the rural and other characteristics of the site and surrounding area.

Maintenance of the rural character and appearance of the rural areas is a key objective of the MSS.

Objective

To ensure that the siting and design of new development protects and enhances the character of the City's rural areas.

To minimise the visual impact of development on and near prominent hilltops, steep slopes and ridgelines.

To protect significant roadside views of hilltops, creek valleys and other important features of landscape interest, from development that is poorly sited, or of an inappropriate scale, height, bulk or appearance.

Policy

It is policy that:

- New development is located near existing buildings and vegetation on the land.
- Outbuildings and garages should be located as close to the house as possible and screened from view by planting, using species compatible with the landscape character of the area.
- On steeply sloping land, access roads and service lines should follow contour lines where ever practicable.
- Strong 'architectural statements' and buildings not residential in scale are avoided.
- Buildings are constructed of materials and painted in colours that blend with the surrounding landscape.
- Buildings are sited to maximise the retention of existing remnant vegetation.

- Effective stormwater management will be considered as part of new development proposals.

Ridgelines, hilltops and hillsides

- New development on or near hilltops and other visually prominent locations is avoided. Where hilltop development cannot be avoided, appropriate mounding treatment around the developed area is encouraged to provide screening.
- New development located within 30 metres (measured vertically) of the centre-line of a ridgeline or hilltop is discouraged.
- Buildings are designed so that the profile of the building reflects the landform on which it is sited, and so that it does not protrude above the ridgeline. If necessary, the building should be stepped down the slope of the hill so as to minimise the building height.
- Along ridgelines and on hillsides, one storey and split level buildings are encouraged.
- Extensive earthworks are avoided as substantial alterations to the natural topography disrupt the flow of the landform and generally appear as unsightly scars in the landscape.
- Where cut and fill batters cannot be avoided, the batters should be landscaped with appropriate erosion control planting and other stabilisation techniques.

Approach roads

- New development within 100 metres of an approach road shown on the attached plan is discouraged.
- Where development within 100 metres of an approach road cannot be avoided, it is to be screened from view by planting (using species compatible with the landscape character of the area).
- New development along approach roads is sited and designed so as not to:
 - obscure views of prominent hilltops, ridgelines or creek valleys; or
 - dominate views across open plains.
- Features and buildings of landscape interest, such as building ruins and bluestone bridges, should remain visible from approach roads and not be obscured from view by new development.

Policy Reference

Hume City Council Guidelines for Development of Scenic Hilltops and Major Ridgelines Policy (1991), amended 1995.

Approach Roads Plan

