

22.0803/10/2013
C134**RURAL LAND USE POLICY**

This policy applies to all land within the municipality located within a Green Wedge Zone, Green Wedge A Zone, Rural Conservation Zone, or a Farming Zone.

MSS Context

Preserve the integrity of the City's rural land for sustainable and efficient rural land uses; and to maintain a permanent non-urban buffer between metropolitan Melbourne and the Melton township.

Policy Basis

Melton's rural areas are a valuable asset to the local and regional community and economy. These areas will remain rural in character and will provide for the establishment of non-urban activities and limited residential development in a planned and co-ordinated manner. All future developments must, however, respect the sensitive rural landscape and environment of the rural areas. Melton's rural areas represent a large portion of Melbourne's western rural-urban fringe. They are characterised by the relatively flat and treeless landscape of Melbourne's western basalt plains. The rural areas serve a multitude of roles. Firstly, they provide a permanent break or green-wedge between metropolitan Melbourne and Melton. Secondly, the rural areas enhance the lifestyles of residents by offering a country-type outlook and rural landscape. Thirdly, the rural areas also have a role in employment and wealth generation, for both farmers and non-farmers alike. However, Melton's rural economy has experienced pronounced and enduring change. This has affected the way in which rural land is used and managed. In previous years, Melton was a highly profitable and successful producer of cereal crops for the domestic market. Grazing was also well-suited to the land and weather conditions, and many landowners combined both cropping and grazing activities. In recent years, however, a number of factors (such as declining commodity prices, weed infestation and its proximity to urban areas) have combined to reduce the profitability of these pursuits and farming has declined throughout the City. Despite the economic downturn that has occurred in recent times, Council is confident that the rural areas will once again play a role in generating economic activity and employment. Furthermore, Council sees the rural areas as a strategic asset that, if properly and sensitively managed will enhance Melton's image regionally, nationally and internationally. The preservation of our rural areas is therefore a high priority.

Policy Objectives

- To maintain the rural areas predominantly in sustainable, agricultural use and to provide opportunities for alternative, more intensive rural uses.
- To encourage the consolidation of lots to ensure more effective land management practices and infrastructure provision.
- To provide opportunities for rural living in controlled, well planned, economically sustainable developments which minimise environmental impact in locations accessible to infrastructure and services.
- To promote economic development, tourism and rural enterprises which are compatible with, and ancillary to, rural activities.
- To ensure all land use and development is in accordance with proper land management practices which will conserve the natural resources, amenity and environmental values of the rural areas, particularly with respect to air quality, noise and watercourse capacity.
- To maintain and enhance the landscape of the rural areas by encouraging development that is in harmony with the rural landscape.

- To encourage the retention of remnant areas of native vegetation and the planting and maintenance of windbreaks and tree lines.
- To ensure that the use or development of land does not lessen the service, safety, future alignment, role and amenity of freeways and highways.
- To avoid linear or ribbon development along highway and freeway frontages.

Policy

- It is local policy (“A”) to:
- Ensure that large tracts of agricultural land are clearly identified and set aside for productive agricultural activities.
- Ensure that the location of future rural living uses does not prejudice the operation and expansion of efficient agricultural pursuits.
- Discourage rural living development and small lot excisions from occurring in areas of productive agricultural land or adjacent to areas identified for future stone extraction (as shown on the Physical Framework Plan).
- Ensure that urban infrastructure associated with rural subdivision and development is financed by the developer rather than being a cost on the general community.
- Ensure that the density of dwellings is not increased in those areas affected by the Airport Environs Overlay schedule Nos. 1 and 2.
- Ensure that all secondary lots created in the rural areas be connected to a reticulated water supply and the municipal sealed road network.
- Ensure that all buildings and works comply with the “Design and Siting Guidelines for Rural Zones”, Melton City Council, 1996.
- Ensure that all applications are accompanied by an Environmental Management Plan prepared in accordance with “Guidelines for the Preparation of Environmental Management Plans in Melton’s Rural Areas”, Melton City Council, 1996.
- Discourage proposals on freeways and highways which lessen the level of service, safety and function of the road; which result in a lessening in appearance and visual amenity of the area; which result in a loss of vegetation; and which extend linear or ribbon forms of development.