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NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

This Clause provides local content to support Clause 14 (Natural Resource Management) of the State Planning Policy Framework.

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Sustainable farming

Overview

Farm production is the most important economic activity in the municipality. The protection and enhancement of farming is linked to the environmental and economic wellbeing of the municipality.

One of the municipality's major strengths is availability of water and the opportunity to develop and intensify irrigated farming. The dairy industry continues to be a major contributor to agricultural productivity within the municipality. Livestock production and the dry-land farming of wheat and other field crops are also important. Newer horticultural enterprises are continuing to develop. Opportunities for extending irrigation into dryland areas need to be investigated.

Historically, about 55% of the municipality has been supplied with irrigation infrastructure. The maintenance of the irrigation assets and the ongoing access to good quality and quantities of water are central to the growth of the farming economy. The retention of water rights in the irrigation district is essential for the continued viability of irrigated agriculture. It is clear that less irrigation water will be available in the future than has usually been available in the past. Terms of trade in some farm industries are deteriorating due to increasing costs of production and low and variable returns.

Fragmentation of productive farming land by inappropriate subdivision is to be avoided to ensure the productive capacity of the land is maintained. Development of dwellings at a density greater than is required for the rural use of land can give rise to rural residential enclaves which are remote from townships and which may be in conflict with farming practices. Isolated non-farm dwellings in rural areas have the potential to disrupt farming activities and should not impinge on the appropriate use of farming land.

Some discretion is required to consider subdivision of land for horticulture purposes below the specified minimum (20 hectares) due to growth in the horticultural industry; benefits arising from transferable water entitlements; and the ability, in some circumstances, for enterprises to productively utilise land parcels smaller than the specified minimum size.

The future of the farming industry is dependent on sustainable farm practices. Sustainable management of land and water resources that minimises pollution to waterways, soil salinity and erosion and retains and manages native vegetation will raise productivity levels into the future.

There are opportunities to integrate farm production with the sustainable management of environmental assets such as forests, woodlots, native grasslands, wetlands and floodplains.

A productive farming sector is vital for the economic, social and community life of the municipality. If farming is prosperous, population can be retained, and economic development and employment opportunities can be increased.

Key issues

- Protecting the agricultural base of the municipality.
- Responding to the availability and cost of irrigation water.
- Promoting innovation, diversification of agriculture and sustainable use of farmland.
- Creating positive and beneficial environmental impacts through farming uses and farm management.
- Managing residential development within farming areas.
- Locating intensive animal industries appropriately.

- Encouraging value-adding industries in the municipality.
- Retaining farming land in productive units.

Objective 1

To encourage and support commercial farming and farm production as a vital component of the economic base of the municipality.

Strategies

- Increase opportunities for high value irrigated agriculture by delivering water to suitable soils; encouraging enterprise mix; and protecting land and water resources.
- Support the diversification of agriculture, including the development of horticulture, agro-forestry and intensive animal industries, and the processing of agricultural products grown within the municipality.
- Strongly discourage conversion of land to non-soil based use and development unless there is no other suitable site for the proposal and significant public benefit is demonstrated.
- Encourage adoption of sustainable agricultural practices based on soil types and water availability to ensure long term production potential.
- Consider land capability and land suitability in the assessment of use and development proposals.
- Promote on-farm drainage re-use for effective nutrient management where practical.
- Ensure that drainage works and effluent management schemes are consistent with management plans for rivers, streams and wetlands.
- Facilitate the extension of efficient irrigation systems to areas which have a demonstrated capacity to be able to manage additional water without lessening the value and long term productive capacity of land.
- Encourage protection of irrigation and road infrastructure in horticultural areas.
- Retain a 40 hectare minimum subdivision size for dryland areas and a 20 hectare minimum subdivision size for the irrigated district.
- Encourage the consolidation of farmland into larger parcels and discourage the fragmentation of farmland.
- Ensure that any small rural lot created under the provisions of the Schedule to the Farming Zone is genuinely required for an intensive farming or horticultural activity which is already established or is about to commence on the land.
- Encourage and support innovative and experimental farming activities, practices and management structures wherever appropriate.
- Encourage high quality design and appropriate siting of intensive animal industry developments and dairy farms based on the capability of land for the management of nutrients and the disposal of effluent; the adequacy of infrastructure services; and the location of sensitive use and development.
- Encourage revegetation of farmland and retention of existing tree cover wherever practicable, so as to improve productivity by providing shelter for livestock and crops and by reducing wind erosion and salinity.

Objective 2

To promote agricultural diversification in terms of farming products, outputs and incomes.

Strategies

- Encourage establishment of solar ‘farms’ either as stand-alone enterprises or as part of commercial farming and livestock production.

- Investigate the viability of tree-planting for land management, production of tree products such as nuts, fruits, timber and fodder, and the sale of carbon off-sets.
- Encourage sustainable integrated rural development projects which combine farm production, land management, environmental improvement and rural development.

Objective 3

To encourage the provision of value-adding industry opportunities by processing at or near the source of the farm product and by establishing rural enterprises as an adjunct to agriculture.

Strategies

- Recognise the advantages of Gannawarra Shire for industries processing farm products, produced both locally and within the wider region.
- Encourage value-adding industries that demonstrate sustainable management and disposal of effluent and waste.
- Encourage the establishment of value-adding industries and industries that service the agricultural sector within industrial zones in urban centres.
- Encourage the establishment of value-adding and agricultural service industries in rural areas, in locations with good road access and where off-site effects can be minimised, where proposed developments cannot be located in industrial zones.

Objective 4

To manage residential development in farming areas considering its impact on commercial farming and the need for protection from hazards.

Strategies

- Ensure that new dwellings in farming areas are required to support economic farming.
- Discourage the construction of new dwellings on lots smaller than the minimum subdivision size (20 hectares in irrigated areas and 40 hectares in dryland areas) unless the land is being used for a farming enterprise, or the land has limited farming potential but contains native vegetation that will be retained and managed, and the new dwelling will not inhibit farming activities on nearby land.
- Encourage the consolidation of land in the same ownership to support applications for new dwellings and excisions of existing dwellings.
- Facilitate the separation of dwellings no longer required as part of a farming operation onto individual titles which can be sold.
- Consider proposed excisions of existing dwellings and re-subdivisions of lots containing a dwelling in terms of their impact on commercial farming and their compatibility with the *Rural Excision Guidelines*.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to sustainable farming will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

- Requiring an application for intensive animal husbandry to be accompanied by plans and information indicating, as appropriate:
 - Dimensions and locations of all existing and proposed buildings and works, extensions or alterations and title boundaries at a minimum scale of 1:200.
 - Drainage lines through the land or for run-off water that may be discharged from the site.

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- Location of existing dwellings on the site and adjacent properties, and the existing use of all other land within 0.5 kilometres of the site.
- Areas used or proposed to be used for intensive animal raising, grazing, manure disposal and drainage disposal.
- A Water Management Plan that includes method of waste disposal and treatment.
- Source and capacity of water supply to the site.
- Clear delineation (pegging) on the site of boundaries of proposed buildings and works to permit inspection by the responsible authority.
- Requiring an application for new dwellings or for subdivision of land which includes a dwelling on a lot smaller than the minimum lot size specified in the Schedule to the Farming Zone to be accompanied by:
 - A report demonstrating how the proposal:
 - is consistent with the Municipal Strategic Statement, relevant local policies, the purpose of the Farming Zone and where appropriate the Rural Excision Guidelines.
 - has addressed all relevant decision guidelines of the Farming Zone.
 - will result in the land being sustainably used and managed for the agricultural enterprise.
 - relates to the efficient use of existing infrastructure.
- When deciding on applications for the use and development of land for intensive animal husbandry, considering, as appropriate:
 - The need to ensure the location of enclosures, yards or buildings where animals are intensively raised is at least 200 metres from any river, creek, watercourse or pondage, at least 500 metres from a dwelling on any other property, and at least 30 metres from any road (whether or not this road forms the frontage of the land).
 - The desirability of discouraging the use of sites smaller than 4 hectares in area.
 - The need to ensure that all manure and polluted run-off water from any enclosures, yards or buildings used in conjunction with any intensive animal husbandry, or any water otherwise contaminated as a result of such use, is treated and disposed of either within the boundaries of the site or in an alternative manner to the satisfaction of the responsible authority.
 - The need for measures including landscaping to ensure the use and development does not prejudicially affect the amenity of the locality by reason of appearance or emission of noise, smell, fumes, waste water, waste products or otherwise.
 - The effect of the proposed development on the amenity of adjacent land.
 - Whether the ability to use adjacent land for rural activities and production will be compromised by the proposed development.
- When deciding on applications for subdivision, considering, as appropriate:
 - The need to ensure that the excision of a lot containing a dwelling does not restrict agricultural production on adjacent land.
 - The need to ensure that adequate distance is maintained within the excised lot around the dwelling to reasonably limit likely impacts of nearby farming activities.
 - The need to require the planting of vegetation within the excised lot and/or the parent lot so as to reduce potential impacts of farming activities on the amenity of the dwelling.
 - The need to ensure that new dwellings and existing dwellings newly excised from larger lots have all-weather road access and a water supply sufficient for fire-fighting.

- The provisions of the *Rural Excision Guidelines* as applicable to the proposal.

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Farming Zone to all farming land in the municipality.
- Specifying minimum subdivision areas of 20 hectares for irrigated farming land and 40 hectares for dryland farming land in the Schedule to the Farming Zone.
- Within the Farming Zone, applying relevant overlays to recognise and manage environmental conditions, vegetation and flooding risk and hazard as follows:
 - Applying the Environmental Significance Overlay to watercourse environs, highway environs, lake environs and areas of poor drainage or potentially subject to inundation.
 - Applying the Vegetation Protection Overlay to areas that contain significant vegetation, including existing roadside and wildlife corridors.
 - Applying the Rural Floodway Overlay and the Land Subject to Inundation Overlay to areas known to be at risk from flooding.
 - Applying the Public Acquisition Overlay to land required for a public purpose.
 - Applying the Restructure Overlay to several small, old subdivisions.

Further strategic work

- Considering the findings of the *Lake Charm, Kangaroo Lake and Gunbower Creek Environs Strategy* and whether additional land now in the Farming Zone should be made available for rural living development.
- Considering in the longer term whether some land now in the Farming Zone could be rezoned to Rural Activity Zone, so as to increase opportunities for non-farm uses and developments.

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Catchment planning

Overview

Gannawarra Shire Council is committed to an ecologically sustainable catchment via the appropriate management of its natural resources, including protection of floodplains, watercourses and wetlands in order to maintain biodiversity and improve water quality; retention of remnant vegetation in order to maintain biodiversity, prevent erosion and control water tables and salinity; control and management of salinity; use of whole farm planning and improved agricultural techniques; and appropriate management of floodwaters, stormwater runoff, effluent and waste materials.

Key issues

- Promoting integrated catchment management throughout the municipality.
- Creating positive and beneficial environmental impacts from farming uses and through farm management.
- Minimising the impacts of unsewered towns and individual wastewater treatment systems on land in the catchment.
- Recognising the value and need for co-operative activities with other land management authorities to effect long-term management and improvement of the catchment.

Objective 1

To protect the environmental values and water quality of the land and waters of the Murray-Darling catchment and ensure the sustainable development of the natural resources of the catchment.

Strategies

- Promote integrated catchment management through participation in the formulation of catchment and natural resource strategies and representation on catchment and natural resource organisations.
- Ensure that land use and development provides a net environmental benefit to the catchment.
- Assist in implementing the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy; salinity management plans; and water quality, flood management and other relevant natural resource strategies.
- Encourage the maintenance and development of vegetated links between remnant vegetation areas through tree planting, farm forestry and re-establishment of understorey.
- Manage salinity risk by reducing ground water accessions, preventing development within high risk salinity areas and managing salt-affected areas.
- Encourage the use of land capability surveys as a means of demonstrating that land is capable of sustaining the proposed use or development.
- Promote drainage works and schemes which encourage on-farm drainage re-use and consistency with approved surface drainage scheme and management plans for the protection and improvement of wetlands, streams and forests.
- Improve urban stormwater management consistent with urban stormwater plans.
- Encourage sustainable agricultural industries that are based on efficient use and re-use of water.

Implementation

The strategies in relation to catchment planning will be implemented through the planning scheme by:

Policy guidelines

- When deciding on applications for use and development that may impact on catchment planning, considering, as appropriate:
 - The need to require agricultural land use and development proposals to address land management issues and the efficiency of water use.
 - The need to comprehensively assess the effects on the catchment and the natural environment which may result from land use and development proposals.