

Tree Farms

Local Planning Policy

VERSION 2

December 2015

town planning services

Version	Adoption	Comment
1	28 August 2012 Council Item SC054	Final – No objections received during advertising.
2	15 December 2015 Council Item DRS242	Readopted under the new LPS No. 1.

Contents

1.0 CITATION.....	3
2.0 BACKGROUND.....	3
3.0 OBJECTIVES	3
4.0 POLICY MEASURES	4
4.1 General Planning Considerations.....	4
4.2 Application Requirements	4
4.3 Advertising Applications	5
5.0 DEFINITIONS	5

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 *Tree Farms 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

Tree farms (including agroforestry, tree plantations and farm forestry) in Western Australia have an important role in providing a sustainable resource for economic development, as well as providing a means for improving farmland degradation by salinity and erosion caused by over-clearing.

The prospect of the widespread introduction of farm forestry initially created several significant planning issues for local governments including:

- Absence of any comprehensive code of practice which created confusion about and misunderstanding of many aspects of farm forestry;
- Impacts on the local road system caused by logging trucks at harvesting time and the costs imposed on local government for road construction and upgrading;
- Fire management and increased requirements for funding fire fighting equipment;
- The potential visual impact of plantations on the landscape and areas of high scenic quality;
- The potential social impacts arising from changing employment patterns; and
- Concern over the potential loss of prime agricultural land to plantations.

These issues now have been addressed in various ways, the most significant being the release of the *Code of Practice for Timber Plantations in Western Australia* by the Forest Industries Federation (WA) Inc. The code of practice is available from: www.forestindustries.com.au.

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- a) To support and encourage the development of tree farms for its combined economic, environmental and social benefits and its greater contribution to sustainability in rural areas.
- b) To actively encourage the integration of tree farms with existing agricultural uses as a complementary, but primarily ancillary use.
- c) To encourage the selection of tree species that are complimentary to native remnant vegetation to assist in maintaining landscape value and assist in the reduction of salinity, waterlogging and erosion.
- d) To encourage planting areas with linkages to existing remnant vegetation on the same or adjacent land parcel.

- e) To generally discourage the use of whole farming properties (which may include several land titles) for plantations, particularly where it contains a residence.
- f) To achieve tree farm designs which do not compromise the fire safety of the local community, biodiversity conservation or the management of reserves.

4.0 POLICY MEASURES

4.1 General Planning Considerations

In planning for tree farms consideration should be given to the following:

- a) The provisions of the code of practice.
- b) Impact of high-value land and water resources in areas of agricultural significance.
- c) The environmental, social and economic effects of tree farm development.
- d) The capacity of the regional and local road network to service timber harvesting needs.
- e) The visual landscape, including the need to protect and enhance areas of high scenic quality.
- f) The compatibility of tree farms with adjacent land uses.
- g) The proximity to any land zoned or earmarked for residential development, with the desire to maintain at least a 1 kilometre buffer.
- h) Acceptable separation distances between the tree farm use and any use which may be sensitive to the proposal or the exposure of pesticides (mainly if any aerial spraying is proposed).

4.2 Application Requirements

In addition to the material required to accompany a development application under the Scheme, a detailed submission will be required with information and plans on:

- a) Description of existing agricultural activities conducted on the land, explanation of how the proposed planting areas have been selected and details on how the application complements continued agricultural activities.
- b) Address the objectives of the applicable zoning in the Scheme.
- c) Explanation of how the application complies with the code of practice (for applications 10 hectares or larger), including a Plantation Harvest Plan.
- d) A fire management plan which should include details on access, setbacks from dwellings, firebreaks and water supply for fire fighting purposes.
- e) Details of planting of areas to provide vegetation corridors, linkages to remnant vegetation or assist to protect remaining cropping/grazing areas on the same property from wind erosion.
- f) A description of the measures to be taken to minimise sand drift, dust, measures, erosion, watercourse siltation etc.

4.3 Advertising Applications

Any development application for a tree farm that is 10 hectares, or larger will be advertised in accordance with the Scheme.

5.0 DEFINITIONS

Farm Forestry means any commercial tree production on farmland. It includes private timber plantations undertaken on land for single purpose production and the commercial planting of trees where there is some degree of planned integration with conventional agriculture (agroforestry).

Fire Management Plan means specified procedures for preventing and controlling fires.

Plantation has the meaning given in the *Code of Practice for Timber Plantations in Western Australia*. The code of practice defines Plantation as a stand of trees of 10 hectares, or larger, that has been established by sowing or planting of either native or exotic tree species selected and managed intensively for their commercial and/or environmental value. A plantation includes roads, tracks, firebreaks and small areas of native vegetation surrounded by plantations. Implicit in this definition is the recognition that plantations will be harvested.

Plantation Harvest Plan means a plan developed before harvesting a plantation detailing the time of harvest, procedure for harvesting (including measures to protect local environmental and social value) and the route by which the products will be transported to a processor.

Plantation Management Plan means specific details of the development and management of a plantation. A plantation management plan may include plantation maps, establishment, maintenance and fire management procedures (refer to Appendix 1 of the code of practice).